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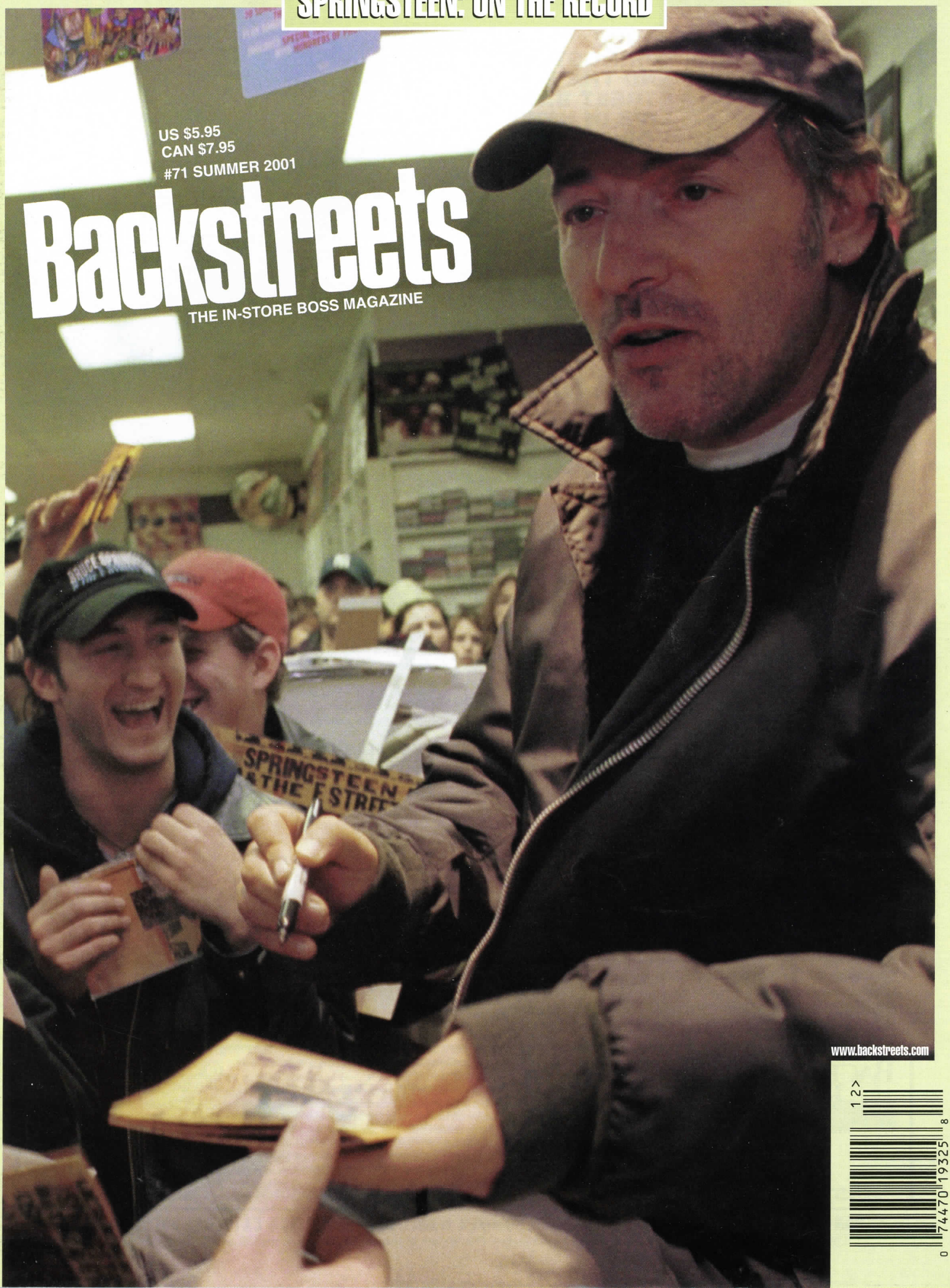

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Backstreets

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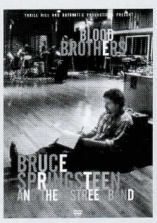

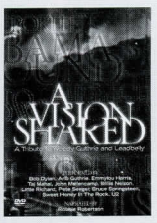

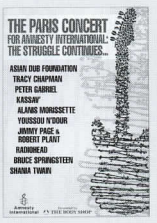

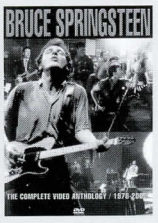

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JOHN CAVANAUGH PHOTO

Dueling guitars: Springsteen and Bobby Bandiera at the Stone Pony, 5/27/01.

Backstreets

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Joseph Delconzo Photo

OFF THE WALL

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
5/27/01 Asbury Park, NJ
Ruth Barohn Photo

InConcert Best

Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Live Album

By Erik Dylan Flannigan (with apologies to David Foster Wallace)

Nearly 15 years elapsed between the release of *Live in New York City* and *Live/1975-85*, Springsteen's last live album,[1] a period which marked a change from Springsteen as a man of the people to a man of, well, us folk. By which I mean '75-85 may be the only live album in history perceived and received as the full-on next major album by a major artist and embraced as such, in this case as the highly anticipated follow-up to the wildly successful *Born in the U.S.A.*. Staggering pre-orders, astonishing first-week sales, debuting at No. 1 as a friggin' three-CD and five-LP box set—*Live/1975-85* was a complete anomaly as live albums go, as box sets go, as anything goes.

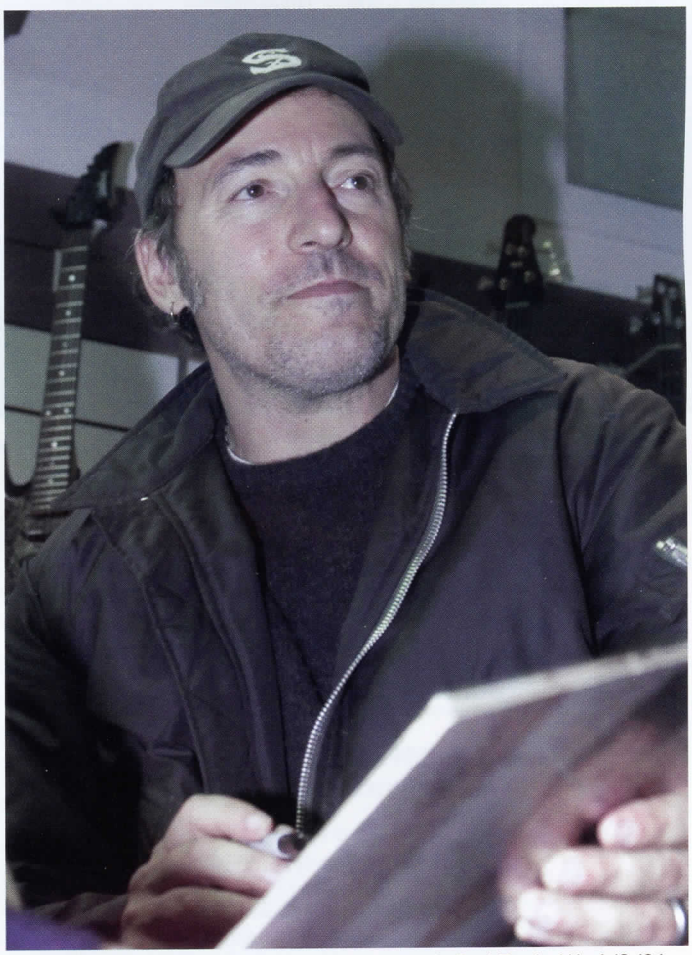
Live in NYC, conversely, met with first week sales of around 115,000,[2] a modest, respectable, Midwestern sort of figure I can wrap my head around. Hell, given the number of shows I've seen and *Backstreets* readers I've crossed paths with over the last 15 years, I may have met everybody who bought the album week one.

I point this out not so much to illuminate Springsteen's diminished commercial stature during the aforementioned years but to illustrate to the gentle reader that fundamental differences distinguish *'75-85* from *Live in NYC* and make the latter, for my money, the far superior document.[3]

Those differences center around the commercial aspirations of the two albums. The public wasn't the only one who recognized *'75-85* as *Born in the U.S.A.*'s follow-up. The Springsteen camp and Columbia Records planned to release singles from the box set all along,[4] and as such, I'd suggest certain decisions, or some might argue concessions, were made knowing the "radio appeal" of the material was important.

"War" was a natural first single and a good choice: a contemporary reading of a soulful protest classic, delivered with exactly the kind of reach-to-Row-ZZ passion that epitomized the 1984-85 tour. It also contained within it a clear message of Springsteen's political bent in the wake of the co-opting of the anthemic "Born in the U.S.A."[5] by conservative elements.[6] But if only for its b-sides,[7] I remain eternally grateful to "War" the single.

Next came "Fire," and while I think I can interpret the logic[8] behind releasing it as the second single, it is here that the distinction between *'75-85* and *Live in NYC* comes to a head for me. It might sound petty to some, but I have a problem with a live album that tries to make a song recorded in a 5,000-seat hall and a 90,000-seat stadium sound the same. Max Weinberg's snare drum had to reach across an entire football field and then



Celebrating the NYC release at Jack's Music in Red Bank, NJ, 4/3/01.

some at the L.A. Coliseum (where "War" was recorded) in 1985, but at San Francisco's Winterland in 1978 (where "Fire" was captured), that drum could have been heard unamplified.

On *'75-85*, whether a song was recorded in a club, a theater, an arena or a stadium, its sonic blueprint is the same, that cannon-blast snare is the same, the result of some fancy remixing and overdubbing of the multi-track recordings. Whether you love that sound or hate it isn't the point so much as it seems fair to say, with almost 15 years of hindsight, that *'75-85* tried to impose the sound of Springsteen's present on his past.

[1] Let's all agree right now, once and for all, to disregard 1993's *Plugged: In Concert*. Disagree? All those who have played *Plugged* in the new millennium please stand up. I didn't think so.

[2] Shhh. Don't tell anybody, but SoundScan counts each CD of a two-CD set individually, which means only 57,500 (or roughly the aggregate attendance at three of the ten nights at Madison Square Garden) actually ventured out to Wal-Mart week one to bring home *Live in NYC*.

[3] Overlooking, of course, the peculiar conceit of treating the album's first 14 songs as the "soundtrack" to the HBO special; the numbering of the aforementioned tracks on the CD packaging (disc two starts with track 11? Or is it 12 now?); the tacking on of six worthy (OK, maybe not "Ramrod") bonus tracks; and the last-minute, can't-live-without-it addition of "Born to Run."

[4] At least three were planned, though only two made it: "War" and "Fire," plus "Born to Run" in Europe.

[5] With which "War" was paired on a regular basis on the *Tunnel of Love* Express Tour.

[6] If *anyone* reading this is still in denial that Bruce Springsteen is an unabashed liberal, I admire your persistence and the depth of your blindness.

[7] The seasonal chestnut "Merry Christmas Baby," but far more significantly, the sublime "Incident on 57th Street" from 12/29/80.

[8] The song was already familiar to Top 40 listeners from the Pointer Sisters' hit cover version just eight years prior.

Granted, the mixes on *'75-85* do give the album a consistency and homogeny of sound across venues and tours. But if they[9] had wanted one sound, why not simply release a complete *Born in the U.S.A.* tour performance?

I believe the answer is they wanted it both ways: to give fans the kind of comprehensive live album they'd been craving for years and a "next" album that could sustain Springsteen's newfound status as a Top 10 singles artist.[10]

With this in mind, the album's second single is problematic. While "Fire" might have become Bruce's first hit instead of "Hungry Heart" if it had been released as a single in 1978, the turbocharged version of pulled from *'75-85* in early 1987 would not prove to be the next "Dancing in the Dark."[11] It was a blast from the past that had more in common with the "Rosalita" video that launched Springsteen mania on MTV in 1984 than the eight Top 10 singles that immediately preceded it.

Speaking of music videos, much to their credit, Springsteen & Co. chose to release a clip of "Fire" performed acoustically at the inaugural Bridge School Benefit Concert in October 1986, a version which shares little in common with the released single. At least here, the performance and the sound belong to the same era.[12] In truth, "War" probably made the Top 10 on reputation and force of will. "Fire," even with its built-in familiarity,[13] never had a chance. A third U.S. single from *'75-85* (presumably "Seeds") was cancelled.

In recent weeks several Springsteen fans have told me that with the release of *Live in NYC*, an opportunity was missed for "American Skin (41 Shots)" to become a hit single.[14] But the moment when "American Skin" could have garnered the most airplay was at the height of the controversy (the start of the NYC run last summer), and that would have been impossible.

Could the song have been a hit this summer? Not a chance.[15] Not given what's sitting in the Top 10 as I write.[16] And, truth be told, Springsteen got plenty out of "American Skin" even without a *Billboard* chart position: Without question "American Skin"'s unreleased/Napster status drove the kind of hip press we saw last year when it made year-end lists in *Rolling Stone* and *Village Voice* and provided a perfect critical-credibility cap to the well-received 1999-2000 tour.

Could "American Skin" have been a hit this summer? Not a chance. Not given what's sitting in the Top 10 as I write.

What I love most about *Live in NYC* is that, unlike its predecessor, it makes no concession to radio airplay. Nor to sonic perfectionism imposed after the fact. From all press reports, and on the evidence of a few glitches left on the album, *Live in NYC* has no overdubs and only a few judicious edits.[17] A friend who was worried about the mix of the record before it came out called me excitedly after several spins to report, "it sounds just like you're at the show, but you're wearing headphones." That's about right. And lots of folks have offered something to the effect of: "I had no idea Danny/Roy/Garry/etc. was playing so intricately/beautifully/etc."

I, too, hear parts I never heard at the shows or on the bootlegs.[18] So on that critical score, *Live in NYC* accomplishes three things that *'75-85* never did for me: It sounds better than the shows I saw[19] but not different; it takes me closer to the performances; and it keeps those performances in their appropriate context.

On that note, quibbles about *Live in NYC* do share one thing in common with criticism of *'75-85*: most are about what's not on the album, rather that what is. But as Fred Mills astutely points out elsewhere in this issue, *Live in NYC* does capture, quite elegantly, the five themes at the emotional core of the '99-2000 tour set. For that alone, it is the genuine article. The heart of the show thousands of us saw. And while it ain't perfect,[20] this time, it *is* for us folks. I for one appreciate that. And until we hear new music[21] from the star of our show, you can find me in the passenger car of "Land of Hope and Dreams."

DA BIZNESS: The input and help we receive from readers around the globe is indispensable. *Live in NYC* reviews... news clippings... photos... many thanks to everyone who contributed this time around.

The help we get from readers is essential not only for putting the magazine together, but keeping it alive. We run minimal advertising, so unlike the vast majority of magazines out there, *Backstreets* is subscriber-supported. If you've picked this issue up on a newsstand, we hope you'll consider subscribing, which helps support *Backstreets* more directly. Not only that; you'll save money off the cover price and receive every issue without having to scour the racks.

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[9] And "they" here likely means some combination of artist, management and label.

[10] Don't forget, *Born in the U.S.A.* had seven, count 'em, seven Top 10 singles. I think that's still some kind of record.

[11] The "Fire" single peaked at #46.

[12] It's interesting to note that Springsteen has never played "Fire" in concert again since that acoustic Bridge School performance, save for a few measures Garry Tallent plunked during the band introductions in Stockholm and at the Meadowlands two years ago.

[13] And perfectly acceptable b-side of "For You"

[14] The fact the a studio version of "American Skin" was cut shortly before the live album's release tells us the Springsteen camp and Columbia took a serious look at the song's potential as a single, though the studio version was never released and radio was serviced with a "radio edit" of the live album cut.

[15] Though if Moby or Timbaland remixed it, you never know.

[16] Janet's "All for You," Lil' Romeo's "My Baby," Dido's "Thank You"

[17] I welcome each and every trim applied to "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out."

[18] And I have it on good authority that the vinyl issue of *Live in NYC* sounds even better than the CD, and was in fact mastered from a superior source vs. the CD.

[19] I was lucky enough to be there for the last two nights at Madison Square Garden.

[20] My previous footnote about bizarre track listings and handling of bonus tracks still holds.

[21] Fearless and completely uninformed prediction: Springsteen will contribute a new song to the soundtrack of Cameron Crowe's forthcoming film, *Vanilla Sky*. You owe me a dollar if I'm right.

LETTERS

BOOGALOO REVISITED

Dear Editor:

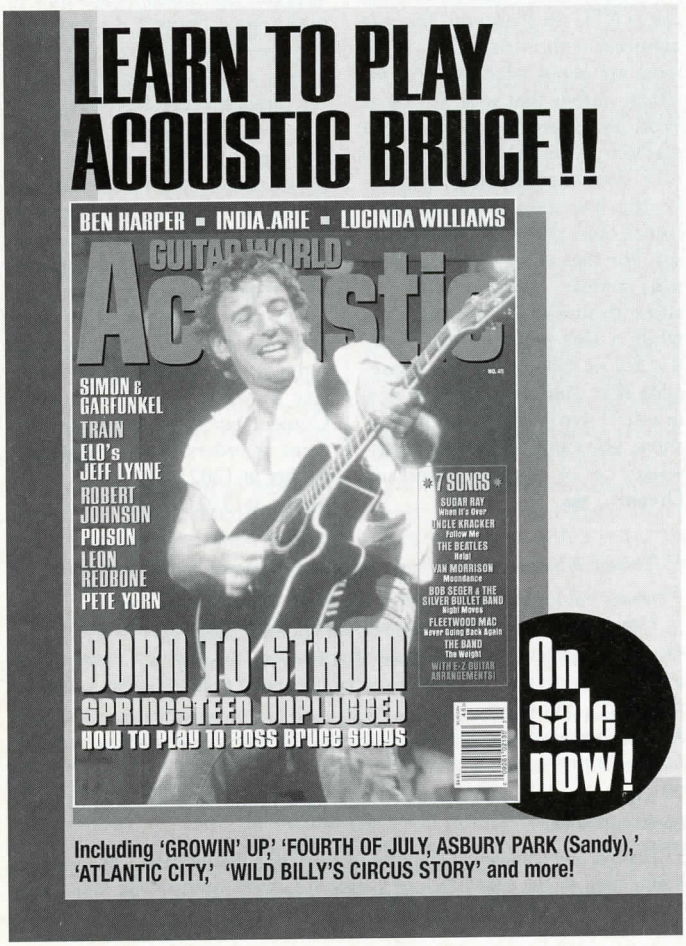
Wow! How great it was to see the commentary on the Video production notes, and especially to see the write-up on "Dancing in the Dark." For me even better, since I wrote the *City Pages* review "Dancing in the Light" that you quote. That will always be one of the best memories of my life.

We didn't receive passes for the shoot—in fact, we had no idea what was happening; we were hanging out at the St. Paul Civic Center by the back doors, hoping to catch a glimpse of Springsteen, and someone with a clipboard walked up to my girlfriend and myself and said, "You're here for the video shoot? You'll need to sign this waiver." My friend and I just looked at each other, both thinking "Oh... My... God...." There were maybe only 125 of us there, and they kept moving us around the stage to shoot from different angles to make it look like full-concert seating. They kept blowing that dry ice around—not because of the effect of the dry ice, but because they were trying to simulate the smoke in the arena.

I remember that one kid there had an MTV T-shirt on, and he was immediately placed in the front row shot (hoping to score a heavier rotation). When Courteney Cox came in, no one knew who she was, but we all wondered how'd she get that cool T-shirt!?? Springsteen seemed frustrated by her lack of enthusiasm and dancing ability, which was backed up later by another girl there at the shoot (a redhead named Sandy), who was in the front row and was so much more enthusiastic about the whole thing. I know that Springsteen must have noticed her, because one of the nights during the real concert he pulled her up and said, "At last, one that can dance!" (All the kids who were in the front row for the shoot got to come up to the front during the real concert for continuity.)

That shoot lasted a long time—I recall finishing about seven in the evening after being there since noon or so. I never got tired of hearing that song over and over, and the best part was that slow-burn version he sang, just himself, that made the whole song just sound so hopeless. I always wished I'd have a chance to hear him do that version again.

Kim Mock Denuit
(writing at the time for City Pages under a pseudonym)
Scottsdale, Arizona



GONNA BE LOOKIN' AT YOU

Dear Editor:

As a longtime SuperSub, it really was quite an honor to have my piece on the *Video Anthology* DVD's numerous errors included in your "*Video Anthology* Viewer's Guide" in issue # 70. However, to paraphrase an old saying, what's good for the Bruce is good for the fanzine. Therefore, I must dutifully and regretfully report an error found in that very same guide. In his introduction, Chris Phillips wrote, "there are no cover songs at all on the *Video Anthology*." Chris, I just want to remind you that in 2001, blind faith in your editors or in anything will get you killed, 'cause what I'm talkin' about here is "War."

Shawn Poole
Philadelphia, PA

CRITICAL MASS

Dear Editor:

Particular gratitude to you for the editorial *[Backstreets* #70], which comes as a huge relief to me after spending so long being frustrated at the general air of disillusionment I've been reading and hearing so much of from many fellow fans. Thank goodness you hit the nail on the head by urging us all to take a step back and look at the big picture and realize just how much we've received and have to be grateful for in recent times. This is a wonderful time to be a Springsteen fan, and the last couple of years particularly have been just magical! Well done for reminding everyone that we have so many blessings to count—what would the last two years have been like without the tour and everything it brought us? It never ceases to amaze me that Bruce's fans can have such short memories and seem to actively look for things to criticize, constantly moaning and bickering about petty quibbles in the face of the generosity of their chosen hero.

There's a question I've never had satisfactorily answered: what would people say if Bruce stopped work tomorrow, for whatever reason? Would they moan and say, "That's not enough—you owe us more!" or would they sit back and say, "Man, that was a hell of a ride—thanks for everything"? I'm sure your guess is as good as mine. Keep your admirable perspective, whatever you do.

Dan French
Essex, UK

THE OTHER MIGHTY ONE

Dear Editor:

Andrew Massimino writes, "amazingly, someone in the crowd (night one, Asbury Park) actually brought a pair of fuzzy dice which managed to find its way onstage..." ["A Holiday Gift For You," *Backstreets* #70]. I would be remiss as the proud papa that I am if I did not point out that the correct predictor of "Roll of the Dice" was none other than my then 11-year-old son, Max, who brings his own power night after night after night. Max, well-known among most hardcore fans, is a veteran of 11 shows on the last tour. I've been on this train for a couple hundred shows since 1973 and, damn, I may not even be the biggest Bruce fan in my own house! But truly, having Max as a son is like being M.I.B.-ed every night.

Rick Rappaport
Atlantic City, NJ

ON THE FRITZ

Dear Editor:

I really enjoyed the interview with Ernie Fritz in issue #70. All the little details he remembers show what a true fan he is, and it's great to know once and for all the full rundown of songs the band attempted in those sessions. So Fritz filmed five *Tom Joad* shows, including the Freehold concert? It's interesting that, while promoting the *Live in New York City* HBO concert, Bruce kept saying he'd wished they'd captured some of the *Joad* shows

NEAL PRESTON PHOTO / COURTESY OF ERNIE FRITZ

A rare glimpse of Blood Brothers *director Ernie Fritz filming Springsteen during the January 1995 Greatest Hits studio sessions.*

on film, and that missed opportunity was what led him to have the Madison Square Garden shows recorded. Was this just a bit of promotional flair? Or had he truly forgotten? Or was the fact that the *Joad* material was deemed unreleasable tantamount to not being filmed at all? Of course, this has happened before. During the time leading up to the *Tracks* compilation, fans reminded Bruce of songs he'd completely forgotten, like "The Iceman."

So don't worry, Bruce—we won't forget that the *Joad* shows were recorded, and we'll help you remember when you're ready for a *Concerts* box set!

Jon Phillips
via e-mail

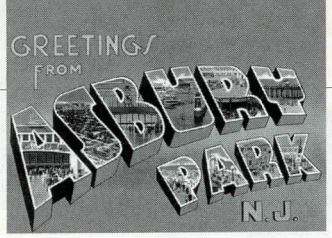
RIDERS ON THIS TRAIN

Dear Editor:

Having had the extreme pleasure of being at the Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes anniversary show May 27 at the Stone Pony, I had to write and say what a wonderful "community" we're all a part of. I say "we" because I know those who will be reading this are to the level of fandom I consider myself to be, those referred to as the "Springsteen community." I've met wonderful people who knew how lucky we all were to be there and would never respond to my excitement with "I just don't get it," or, "You're so funny." I met Maggie Powell, who happens to live in Germany and traveled over for the show, and she, too, experiences many of the same feelings I do, as far as people not understanding our endearment to not only Bruce, but the Asbury Park music scene as a whole. What a pleasure it was to meet someone that I didn't have to explain myself to, and who was as elated to be at the Pony as I was. I also met John Cavanaugh, the Stone Pony official photographer, who knows how lucky he is to have that job! And last but certainly not least, Domenic Santana, the proud owner of the "legendary" Stone Pony, to whom I give my extreme gratitude and respect. He had the faith and wisdom to see what the Pony had to offer and has turned it into a venue that people will travel from all over the world to see. The memorabilia is just fascinating, and the atmosphere is electrifying. Simply being there was a joy. I wish him much success. So to all of the members of "our community," take pride in it. The taxes are low, and there's always "cold beer at a reasonable price!"

Penny Kowalski
via e-mail

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: We love 'em. We read every one, and we print as many as space allows. E-mail to editor@backstreets.com, fax to (202) 232-2259, or mail to *Backstreets* Letters to the Editor, PO Box 11079, Washington, DC 20008 USA.



Shore summer starts off right

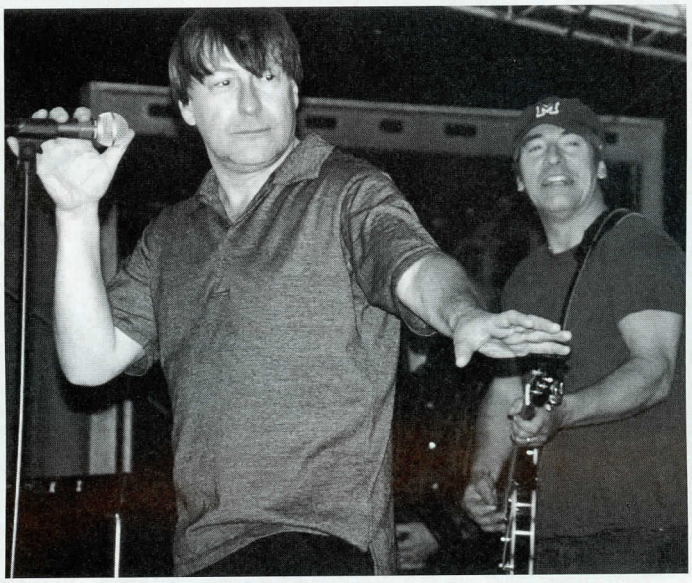
Sounds of Asbury Park

By Robert Makin

Bruce Springsteen gave another memorable performance Memorial Day Weekend at the Stone Pony. In the *Asbury Park Press*, club owner Domenic Santana compared the set to a tornado. "Every time he hits the stage, there's a storm," Santana told the Press. "That's not Mother Nature; he just creates his own."

On May 27, Southside Johnny and the Jukes were back at the Pony 25 years after a legendary 1976 radio broadcast, and history repeated itself as Springsteen once again joined in. Springsteen took the stage at 8:40 p.m., joining the Jukes for the better part of an hour. For Santana, the night was a milestone: the one-year anniversary of the legendary club's reopening. He released 27 balloons when Springsteen took the stage, representing the 27 years of the Stone Pony's history. "It might be cold and chilly, but we have plenty of warm bodies here," Santana told the *Press*. "When he hit the stage, the tornadoes ran the other way."

British rocker Graham Parker also joined Springsteen and Southside. The Stone Pony's Memorial Day Weekend 2001 also featured such longtime Springsteen cronies as Patti Smith, Gary U.S. Bonds and Bobby Bandiera, as well as an all-star lineup of Cuban master musicians and John Entwistle, the legendary bassist of The Who.



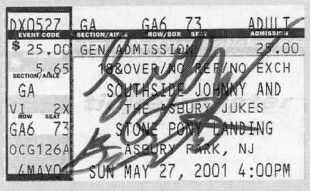
Southside, with Bruce, helps keeps the tornadoes at bay: 5/27/01.

JOHN CAVANAUGH PHOTO

HURRICANE BRUCE

The Fever
I Don't Want to Go Home
New York Shuffle
I've Been Working Too Hard
Trapped Again
Chain of Fools/Born on the Bayou
Havin' a Party

with Southside Johnny & the Jukes
May 27, 2001
The Stone Pony, Asbury Park, NJ



There has been a slew of Asbury-oriented records released in recent months. Here are some quick reviews:

Gary U.S. Bonds • *King Biscuit Flower Hour Presents Gary U.S. Bonds at The Stone Pony, Asbury Park, N.J. November 25, 2000*

Much like the live Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes treasure from '78 in Boston, unearthed last year by the now-defunct Phoenix Radio label, this concert outing by Gary U.S. Bonds is mint. That description may be inspired by the awesome bond-like packaging, but that sleeve also happens to surround a really tasty two-disc set that spans the historic rocker's impressive yet rather unsung career. From his early '60s smashes "Quarter to Three" and "New Orleans" to Springsteen-penned comeback material—"Rendezvous," "Out of Work," "Dedication," "Your Love," "This Little Girl"—and Steve Van Zandt's sweet, soulful "Daddy's Come Home," it's all here. You can hear where both Asbury greats got a chunk of their good-rockin' soul on this disc, especially on the ripping version of cherished "New Orleans."

(King Biscuit Flower Hour Records, www.kingbiscuitradio.com)

Joey Stann • *Family Tree*

Jukes saxophonist Joey Stann lets loose with his swing, Latin and be-bop roots on this solid indie debut, while staying true to the rock 'n' soul he's made with Gary U.S. Bonds and such Jukes as guitarist Bobby Bandiera, both of whom appear on "Family Tree." Stann's swinging originals stand right up alongside covers of be-bop architects Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk. It's too bad "Jump Inn" didn't come out a couple of years ago during the swing revival. It might have gone for quite a ride.

(44 Winthrop Road, Edison, NJ 08817)

Jeff Kazee • *The River*

Asbury Jukes keyboardist Jeff Kazee steps up front with this luscious roots-rocking disc. While the record has the same name as a Springsteen album, Kazee actually sounds more like John Hiatt. They share that friendly-old-ghost vibe that hauntingly recalls the roots of American music while maintaining a sparse but fresh pop appeal. When Kazee isn't busy as a Juke, he also plays with Chocolate Genius and Dar Williams.

(Storia Records, 34-43 28th St., Astoria, NY 11106)

Lance Larson • *To Make a Long Story Short*

It's been nearly 25 years in coming, but veteran Asbury rocker Lance Larson finally has released an album. We've been waiting for "To Make a Long Story Short" for so long that much of the material, such as "Running Wild Child" with Richie Sambora on lead guitar and just about the entire Bon Jovi band on "Listen To Your Heartbeat" is dated with a Springsteen-John Eddie-Bon Jovi kind of '80s pop sound. But the rootsier-sounding stuff—the gospel-inflected "Trust in the Band of Gold," featuring Jersey Shore guitar fave Billy Hector; the folkie "Saints and Sinners"; the rock 'n' soul of "What You Do To Me"; and the Hiatt-like "Devil's Right Hand" with Jukes guitarist Bobby Bandiera and E Street Band bassist Garry Tallent—sounds timeless.

Between growing interest in roots rock and Bon Jovi, Larson may find the success that has eluded him all these years (mainly due to personal setbacks). I'm going to take a cue from the disc's title and just say that fans of the Asbury trinity of Bruce, Southside and Jon Bon will like this disc at its worst and really dig it at its best.

(Mieraarts Entertainment, 302 Osborne Ave., Point Pleasant, NJ 08742)

Bob Makin has been covering the Jersey Shore music scene for 21 years. Jersey Shore bands and clubs can send him info at makinclan@aol.com and material to P.O. Box 6600, Bridgewater, NJ 08807.

Bruce's first performance of 2001

Major-league jam at the Pony

By Lisa Iannucci

"I need some help," declared Southside Johnny, as he paused between songs at the front of the Stone Pony's outdoor stage. It was a chilly but humid Sunday night on Memorial Day weekend, 2001, and wind gusts periodically tossed the tent under which he stood, sending it billowing ominously.

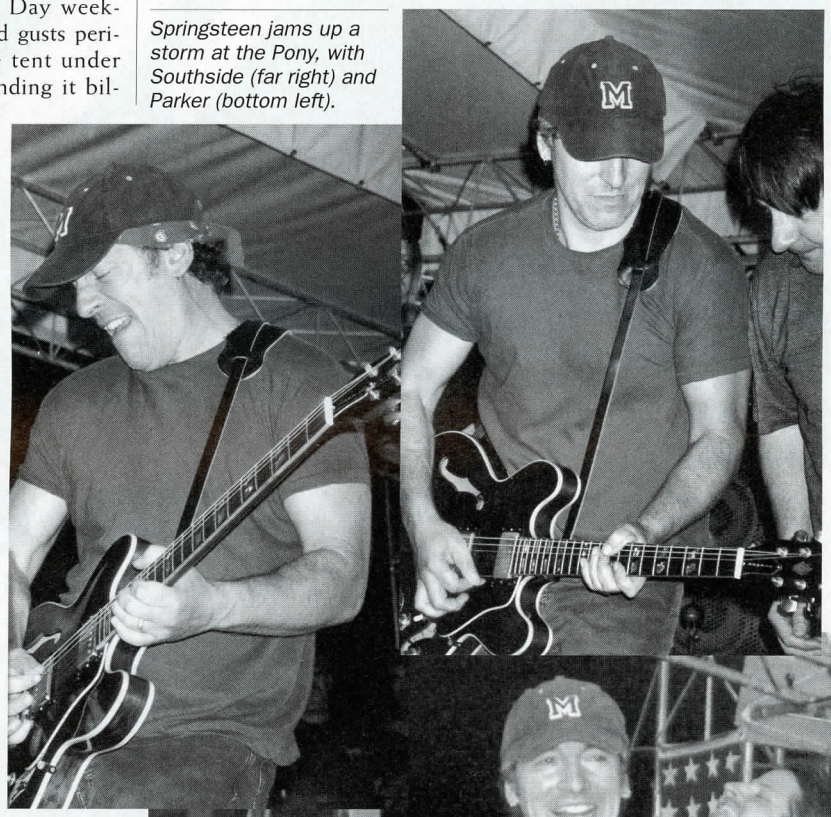
"We know," chided a couple of audience members—often, Johnny's shows thrived upon such banter. Tonight, however, he ignored the comeback tossed his way, and instead continued to taunt the crowd.

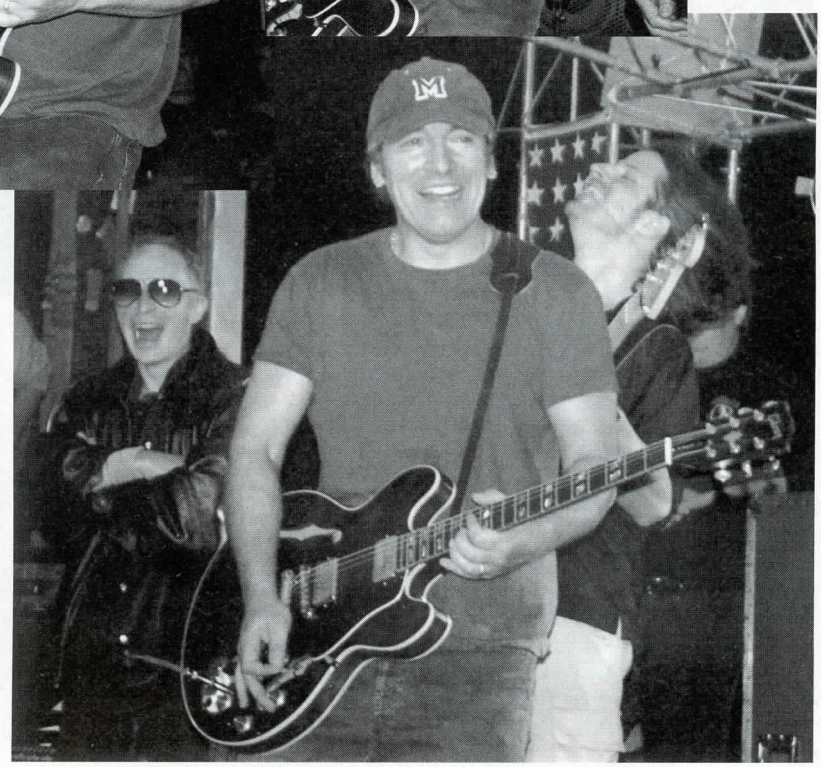
"No, no, I need some big-time, major-league help," he said, wiping sweat from his brow as he stood holding the mic stand. He made no further comment, but stood for a moment or two, allowing the tension to build. Suddenly, shouts of recognition and approval emanated from the audience, as Bruce Springsteen strode exuberantly onstage to Johnny's left, nonchalantly picked up a spare guitar, and began strumming. Predictably, flashbulbs illuminated the night sky, and the crowd pressed forward, eager to get a better view. Oblivious to the chaos which surrounded them, Johnny and Bruce launched into "The Fever."

About half an hour earlier, Bruce had been seen entering the backstage area by a few people who were standing at the edge of the stage; for these faithful fans, it was a treat simply to watch Bruce, cold beer (at a reasonable price!) in hand, nodding his head to the music and casually greeting friends and acquaintances as he stood watching the show in the wings. No one dared hope that he would join the proceedings, especially with the threat of violent weather looming.

Yet here he was, looking young and happy, a red bandanna tied around his head underneath a Memphis Red Sox (Negro League) baseball hat. Bruce has often been described as a chameleon; during the *Joad* tour, he assumed the appearance of a wizened troubadour, his long hair pulled back from a face partially covered by a graying beard. Tonight it was 1984 again (minus some of the muscles). The familiar stance at the microphone as he traded vocals with Southside was that of a younger, carefree Bruce—it was clear that the evening was going to be about having fun.

Springsteen jams up a storm at the Pony, with Southside (far right) and Parker (bottom left).





"The Fever" was followed by "I Don't Want to Go Home," the classic opening track from the Jukes' debut album. Southside was in total command of the stage, and Bruce was asked to play the role of side man to his obvious delight. It was clear that he was enjoying Johnny and the band's performance as much as any fan would, and at the "reach up and touch the sky" lyric, both he and Southside raised the obligatory fist in the air as the crowd jubilantly joined them.

Prior to Southside's appearance, the brilliant Graham Parker had entertained with an acoustic set which combined new material with classics such as "Fool's Gold." He had also been standing offstage watching the show, though unlike Bruce, he had stood alone and undisturbed as he viewed the antics onstage. He was not going to remain undisturbed, however, as Bruce and Johnny now called him onstage to join them. It was a heartwarming and generous gesture, and the result was thrilling.

After a brief pause during which Graham found a spare mic, the Jukes began to play "New York Shuffle," a Parker tune, and then segued into "Working Too Hard." Parker stood to Bruce's

Continued on page 36

TOP 2: RUTH BAROHN HOTOS; BOTTOM: JOHN CAVANAUGH PHOTO

Southside fans flock to Jukestock

Peace, Love, and Jukes

By Mike Saunders

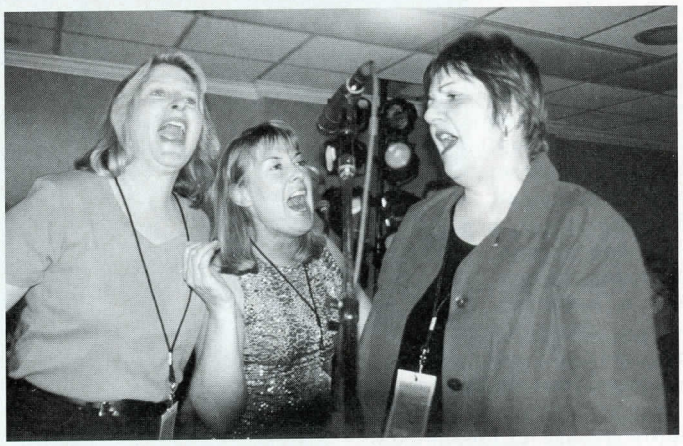
"I wanna get intense tonight, I don't care about nothing, you know," said Southside Johnny to a gathering of his most enthusiastic supporters in early March. "We got a chance to play for some people that understand what the fuck is going on!"

He'd played thousands of shows across the globe in his long career, but this was something different. The occasion was Jukestock, the world's first Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes fan convention, held at a Holiday Inn in Tinton Falls, New Jersey, over the weekend of March 2-4 and organized (almost entirely via e-mail) by long-term fans Debbie May, Jane McCreery and Maggie Powell. Essentially a private party for subscribers to Debbie's Southside Digest internet newsletter, Jukestock attracted 300 fans from the U.S.A., the U.K., Europe and Australia, for three days of "Peace, Love and Jukes."

"It's always been my dream to have something of a special performance for members of the Digest," said Debbie May. "That's why when I received a message from Maggie and Jane proposing a special fan event, I was intrigued. I decided it was worth mentioning to Southside. It turns out that with the new album coming out, he was thinking something along the same lines... the next thing I knew, we were running a poll on the Digest that ultimately became the initial planning stages of Jukestock."

Running from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon, Jukestock featured a packed program of events. These included a three-hour autograph and picture-posing session with Southside and the band, a raffle (which raised $1400 for Save Tillie and World Hunger Year), a challenging trivia contest (the winner of which received two tickets to a Jukes show of their choice) and displays of memorabilia by veteran Jukes road manager Hood and one-time co-curator of the Asbury Park Rock and Roll Museum Billy Smith. In addition, there was merchandise for sale from Rock Dreams, Cleopatra Steps Out, photographer John Cavanaugh and this writer, who brought along copies of his detailed Asbury Jukes Family Tree poster, which attempts to trace the band's many line-up changes and to identify every musician who has played with the Jukes since their formation a quarter of a century ago.

JOHN CAVANAUGH PHOTOS



Above: Southside gets intense; right: The Jukettes (A.K.A. Jukestock organizers Debbie May, Maggie Powell, and Janet McCreery

Most importantly, however, the weekend included over ten hours of live Jukes-related music. Kicking off proceedings on the Friday evening were Jukes keyboard player Jeff Kazee's band Professor Crewcut, who were followed by the Bobby Bandiera Band. On Saturday afternoon, the Mark Pender Band hit the stage, preparing the crowd for the evening show by Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes. The weekend officially closed on Sunday afternoon with a performance by La Bamba's Big Band. A planned optional extra for those die-hards determined to stay until the bitter end had been a post-Jukestock trip to the Stone Pony in Asbury Park on Sunday evening to see Talk Town, but the impending threat of a major snowstorm put an end to that. (Increasingly serious weather reports caused many fans to leave earlier than planned, and the Pony was closed). Instead, in best show-must-go-on tradition, two members of Talk Town played in the hotel bar, while the storm bypassed New Jersey.

Naturally, the centerpiece of the entire weekend was the concert by Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes, a marathon 34-song set that clocked in at just under three-and-a-quarter hours, the longest show the band have ever played, bar none.

"This whole thing has been set up by the fans and I hate 'em for that," Southside joked. "I could have been in the Caribbean this week, but I came up for the blizzard." Introduced by Billy Smith

(who won the "right to introduce the band" raffle prize), the Jukes opened the show with the rarely played "Next to You," one of numerous requests from Digest subscribers (among them "On the Beach," "I'm So Anxious" and "Little Girl So Fine") performed that night. In addition, there were the usual Jukes classics ("Talk to Me," "Trapped Again," "I Don't Want to Go Home"); songs from the new album, *Messin' With the Blues* ("Sinful," "Gin-Soaked Boy," "Living With the Blues"); selections from the two ultra-rare *Ruff Stuff* mini-albums ("Time is Running Wild," "Gladly Go Blind") and the usual array of covers, among them "Fade Away" (Bruce Springsteen), "Little Wing" (Jimi Hendrix), "Bad Girl " (Smokey Robinson) and "Tired Skin" (Alejandro Escovedo).

There were also several moments of craziness, without which no Asbury Jukes performance is complete. "Where's my man from England who's in a band that does Asbury Jukes songs?" demanded Southside. UK fan Neil Packman was then brought up to sing a verse and chorus of "The Fever," acquitting himself well before Southside announced "you're fired!" Also appearing onstage during a typically chaotic version of "Having a Party" (which saw the horn section wading through the audience while still playing) were backing vocalists The Jukettes (A.K.A. Debbie, Maggie and Jane) and Bobby Bandiera's son Robert, who took over on guitar while his dad switched to keyboards. "Thank you very much for coming," said Southside during the encores. "Whether you came from New Jersey or whether you came from New Zealand. The Jukes really appreciate it. You've been great to us for a long time." Then, after a final acoustic version of "Hearts of Stone," it was all over.

Jukestock was a major triumph, not least on an organizational level. It brought Jukes fans together from around the world, many of whom had previously only corresponded by e-mail. It allowed them to meet their favorite musicians and witness a truly unique concert. It made the band more aware of the extent and enthusiasm of their fanbase. It created an opportunity for the Jukes and their admirers to pay tribute to one another, and it was entirely trouble-free. "In many respects, Jukestock took on the spirit of its namesake Woodstock," said Jane McCreery. "A unique event succeeded against the odds because people who believe in the power of a particular kind of music worked together in harmony to make something that seemed almost impossible not only happen, but happen magnificently." "Jukestock began as a wacky idea that turned out to be a totally mind-blowing occasion," agreed Maggie Powell recently. "In terms of success, it surpassed all of our expectations, thanks to the efforts of the guests, the Holiday Inn staff, the road crew and of course, the musicians. An inimitable combination. Already, it is becoming like a good bottle of red wine... getting better with age."

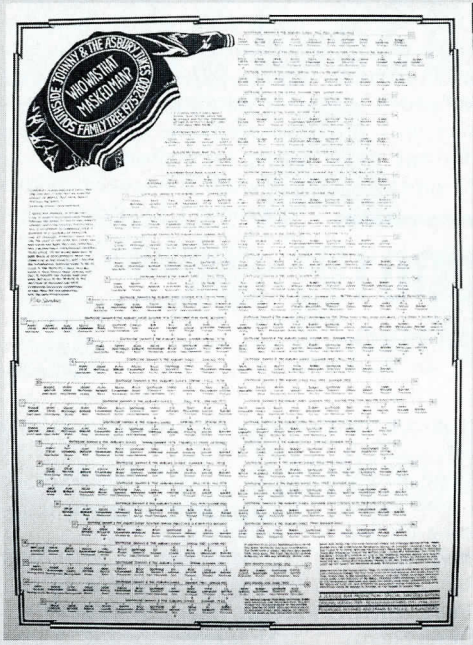
While there are no plans to make it an annual event, Jukestock stands as proof of what can be achieved with the right combination of dedication, organization and cooperation. By all accounts, the musicians were just as fired up after the weekend as the fans. Southside himself, admittedly apprehensive going in, came away enlightened. "Much to my surprise, I had a great time. The time really flew and the people were fantastic. I guess, because I don't think of myself as any stupid rockstar/sex God/musical genius/gift unto the world, nobody else thinks of me that way either. All of the fans were calm and funny and a pleasure to be with. We're very lucky as a band to have the support of folks who don't want anything from us except our best efforts to make good music. I don't take that for granted."

For further information about the Jukestock weekend, check out: www.jukestock.com

To subscribe to the Southside Digest, send a blank e-mail to southside-subscribe@topica.com

To keep up to date with Jukes news, concert dates and merchandise, visit the official Southside Johnny website: www.southsidejohnny.org

Two other Jukes fan sites well worth a visit: pease1.sr.unh.edu/southside and www.jukes.de



ALL IN THE FAMILY

Jukes Family Tree documents 25 years

More than 12 years ago, *Backstreets* received a letter from Mike Saunders. Dated February 22, 1989, it accompanied his first attempt at documenting the ever-shifting line-up of the Asbury Jukes, from 1975-1988. "I had all the info spread around in rough notes and decided after Chrismas to draw out a master copy," Mike wrote in his letter, "for my own reference more than anything. It's compiled from a million reviews, interviews, Jukes features, tapes, etc." The hand-written family tree was finely detailed, spread out over three pages, and clearly the result of much research and persistence, to say nothing of man-hours.

We hadn't seen nothin' yet. In the 12 years since, Mike has both stayed on top of shifts in the Jukedom and delved deeper into the band's early history, revising and overhauling his labor of love to make it as accurate as possible. The result is "Who was that Masked Man? Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes Family Tree 1975-2000." Mike produced this poster-sized historical record just in time for its debut at Jukestock.

As Mike writes in his notes on the new edition, "Close to 70 musicians have passed through the ranks of one of New Jersey's longest-surviving musical institutions. This is my attempt to chronicle over a quarter of a century of regular line-up changes." The Family Tree poster details the line-ups of 48 different configurations of the Asbury Jukes, and presenting all that information in an orderly, easy-to-read manner is an acccomplishment in itself, to say nothing of the research involved. If that weren't enough, he also produced an accompanying booklet of annotations—in effect, an eight-page written history of the band.

A regular contributor to *Backstreets*, Mike has written numerous articles for this magazine over the years, but particularly when we need someone to clear up some Juke-related history—like "The Mystery of the Miami Horns," *Backstreets* #59—Mike's the one we turn to. Thanks to the service he's performed with this Family Tree, the Jukes fan community at large can now do the same.

The Jukes Family Tree 1975-2000 poster, and accompanying booklet, is available from from Backstreet Records for $20 (includes shipping) in the U.S., $28 (includes shipping) overseas. PO Box 11079, Washington DC 20008. Phone: (202) 232-2677. e-mail: orders@backstreets.com

THE NEWS

Is a new album far behind?

Live DVD "Coming Soon"

It ain't no secret: *Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band,* the concert film originally presented on HBO, is coming to home video and DVD. Even if it didn't go without saying, Springsteen has confirmed that fact in several interviews, and Columbia issued a promo reel to retail featuring clips from the MSG film with the tagline, "Coming Soon."

One question remaining is, "how soon?" As this issue goes to press there has yet to be an official announcement; speculation is that a home release will hit this fall, possibly as early as September. Though the HBO special debuted in the U.S. back on April 7, airings in other countries have come later, with the film not debuting in some countries until this summer.

The other question on the minds of fans regards what else a home release might include. With well over a dozen songs from the source concerts filmed but not included in the HBO special, the added-value potential is high, particularly considering the DVD format. While the line-up has not been finalized—and, as *Live in New York City* served to remind us, is likely to fluctuate until the last minute—sources have good things to say about how the set is shaping up. At the moment, the home release is planned as a 2-DVD set, to include the HBO special in its entirety, as well as additional songs filmed at the Garden but not broadcast. Also look for extras to include footage from Springsteen's recent appearance on Bob Costas' HBO program, as well as a program originally produced for the BBC. All subject to change, subject to change...

Not lost in the *Live in NYC* excitement is the fact that there hasn't been an album of new studio material from Springsteen since 1995. Bruce and the E Street band spent five days recording in early March, laying the groundwork for a new record; while Springsteen appears to be taking much of the summer off, or at least out of the public eye, work reportedly continues in the studio. If the numerous interviews Bruce gave this spring are any indication, fans aren't the only ones anticipating a new album.

Though Springsteen continues to mention a handful of projects he'd like to complete, not all of which involve the E Street Band, an E Street record seems to remain a top priority. As Bruce characterized the band to Larry McShane for the Associated Press, "It's an ongoing, creative unit.... It's not going to be our usual amount of time to make a record ... we don't have the time to waste anymore."

As he told Edna Gunderson in *USA Today,* "The big job was reconstituting and rediscovering the band. Now we get to enjoy it. The creative energies are fired up again." Still, having learned his lesson years ago, Springsteen remains typically guarded when it comes to predicting the future: "I'd like to make a studio record with the guys, but I don't want to make any concrete predictions about when that will happen. If we go out on another extensive tour, I'd want a record of new music. I hope it's not too far in the future, but I know better than to set a time limit. That's always been disastrous."

Talking with David Hinckley of the *New York Daily News,* Springsteen stressed that he'd want a new album to support on the road: "There are some bands, like the Stones, where it's fun just to see them play. But this band needs a sense of purpose. I don't want to use the same language we've used in the past."

Here's hoping we'll all be learning a new language soon.

Joey Ramone, 1951-2001

Little Steven pays tribute, live in NYC

Little Steven recently returned to the public-speaking duties in the fine form that helped land his gig as Silvio Dante on The Sopranos. (Steve's 1997 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction speech for the Rascals prompted Sopranos creator David Chase to offer the part.) On May 19, after a New Jersey record-store signing session earlier in the day, Steven had the honor of hosting the Joey Ramone Birthday Bash memorial tribute at Hammerstein Ballroom in New York, NY. Held on what would have been Joey Ramone's 50th birthday, the event honored the memory and influence of the Ramones' lead singer, who died of lymphoma this past Easter Sunday. Numerous artists spoke and performed, both live and on video, in tribute to the legendary punk-rocker. The Ramones' official website, officialramones.com, stated that Steven "impressed the hell out of us with his handling of the MC duties. The guy proved not only his performing talent, but his deep knowledge of the Ramones, their meaning, and their place in rock and roll history."

1-2-3-4! There are a few more E Street/Ramones connections worth noting. As Bruce himself revealed in his *Greatest Hits* liner notes, his first Top Ten hit ("Hungry Heart") was originally written at Joey's request for the Ramones to record. The Ramones' influence can also be heard on the original B-side to "Hungry Heart", "Held Up Without a Gun", which is punk-rock Springsteen-style and clocks in at 1:15, in grand Ramones fashion. Jean Beauvoir, who was one of Little Steven's Disciples of Soul and sang "Hungry Heart" with Bruce and the E Street Band at the '99 Paris show, produced several of the Ramones' albums and singles. "Living on the Edge of the World", the earlier version of "Open All Night" eventually released on *Tracks,* sounds like the song Bruce could have given to the Ramones to "atone" for keeping "Hungry Heart," all the way down to the "hey ho" lyric.

—Shawn J. Poole

Springsteen wins U.S. copyright suit

As of June 22, Bruce Springsteen has copyright control of all of his compositions. While the Royal Courts of Justice brought that verdict in England back in late 1998 (see *Backstreets* #61), Springsteen has had to continue to defend his ownership of the same material in the U.S., where Pony Express Records filed a bid to retain copyright.

The material in question is what have become known among fans as the "Prodigal Son" recordings, Springsteen demos from the early '70s first reported to be issued under that title by Dare International back in 1994 (see *Backstreets* #45). While Dare never released that set, those songs have showed up under various titles since then, from bootlegs to purportedly legitimate—if unauthorized—titles such as *The Early Years, Unearthed,* and *Before the Fame.*

Before the Fame was the title in question in the claim of Pony Express Records. Citing the previous British ruling, U.S. District Court Judge Harold Ackerman dismissed the label's claim, prohibiting further sale and ordering remaining copies of the CD to be destroyed. Springsteen's suit for damages from Pony Express remains pending.

Steven Hayes, attorney for Springsteen, told Reuters, "We're thrilled, and I think it's important and significant that Bruce now owns all of his own music."

JIM SHERRADEN, WHO has managed Hatch Show Print for the Country Music Hall of Fame since 1984, has created album covers for Hank Williams, Bill Monroe, Emmylou Harris, Ricky Skaggs, and a host of others. Not to mention 600-plus posters a year, book jackets, lost cat signs, whatever.

HATCHING A PLAN

THE MAKING OF SPRINGSTEEN'S LIVE ALBUM COVER AT NASHVILLE'S HATCH SHOW PRINT

So he is a tiny bit perplexed by the attention now being paid a project he did for a man from New Jersey he met only once. "To me," he says over a bowl of Irish stew, "this is my job that I do on Monday. But a whole lot of folks are awfully interested in how we created this. And I guess I need to get out more."

The cover Sherraden created for Bruce Springsteen's *Live In New York City* is particularly striking amid today's computer-driven design. In large part this is because it was produced using much the same printing technology Johannes Guttenberg developed

BY GRANT ALDEN

about 1450 A.D.—one of the seminal events in western civilization—and pronounced outmoded at some point in the 1960s. It was made by man and machine, and it looks it.

Live In New York's design is striking also because it is meant to mean something, not simply serve as a pretty bit of decoration. Several somethings, in fact, for its components have carefully been selected and arranged not only to do the job of announcing and selling the record, but to convey subtle shades and layers of meaning.

SHERRADEN IS CUSTODIAN of one of the last working letterpress shops in the United States. Hatch Show Print has been printing posters for Southern entertainers continuously since 1889. Their five presses were state of the art during the Second World War. The shop's history is summarized in a new book, *Hatch Show Print: The History of a Great American Poster Shop* (Chronicle).

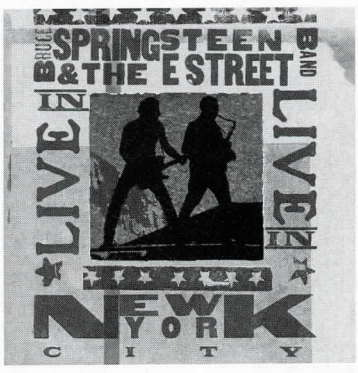
Still, some explanation is doubtless called for, as printing and design comprise arcane worlds. You've probably seen a letterpress on *Bonanza* or some other western, printing the community newspaper or a wanted poster. The press itself physically brings ink, paper, and raised metal or wood type together, sort of like a rubber stamp. The type (and carved images, called "cuts" in the trade) are arranged in a flat and very heavy wood tray. Most printing today—like this magazine—is offset, but there's no reason to trouble over that.

Typefaces were converted from wood and lead blocks to images on a filmstrip, and by the late 1970s typography had become a photographic process. (From the early 1980s until 1994 I operated a 750-pound Compugraphic EditWriter that stored text on an 8-inch floppy disc. *Backstreets* was intermittently one of my clients. The headlines for the first issue, in fact, were hurriedly set on a particularly cranky Photon machine on which one very carefully mounted each typeface as a round, glass disc that spun at a high rate of speed, and broke if dropped.)

Letter forms have since been transferred into digital data and are reproduced by computers. With each generation of technology, new typefaces have been created and old ones have fallen out of use. It is, then, possible for an astute graphic designer to subtly suggest different eras of American history simply by using typefaces that were in fashion then.

THE NOTION OF graphic design itself is a comparatively recent phenomenon, dating back to the 1920s and first flourishing during the halcyon 1950s. Before advertising became a kind of art (albeit a black one) it was produced by printers—craftsmen—and by sign painters, typically an itinerant (and alcoholic) lot. Woody Guthrie, in fact, supplemented his income by painting signs until that folk music thing took off.

Sherraden straddles both traditions. He had nine hours of printmaking classes while pursuing an English degree and a songwriting career at Middle Tennessee State University; that's how he got started at Hatch. Turned loose today, he is very consciously a graphic designer, with a budding international reputation. But he is also a craftsman with an abiding respect for the machines on which he works. White and blue collar, then.



GRANT ALDEN PHOTOS

ABOVE RIGHT: **SHERRADEN AND CREW KEEP THE PRESSES ROLLING AT HATCH SHOW PRINT;** ***RIGHT:*** **THE FINAL ALBUM COVER DESIGN AND PLATE.**

Under his guidance, Hatch Show Print has (re)produced work from its past and transformed its iconography into a cultural present. The shop walls are decorated with posters going back almost a century. The type and artwork for many of those posters still exists, carefully arranged on jumbled shelves. Hatch selectively restrikes a dozen or so of their classic posters for sale, but that is not Sherraden's principal goal for the shop.

"The CMF [Country Music Foundation] wants me to preserve the integrity of the archive because it's a bastion of Southern culture," he says. "The shop got rifled through a little bit in the '60s and '70s, so we don't have a complete archive. But we can't cry, because we're creating an archive every day that we go to work here."

Sherraden's new posters at Hatch, some of which are designed by his small, youthful staff, suggest both new and old through juxtapositions of type, color, and recontextualized cuts. Which is how he met that songwriter from New Jersey.

"I designed a poster for his show at the Ryman Auditorium," Sherraden remembers. "I recut an image that Will T. Hatch originally cut in 1939, the same year that Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* came out. And that became the central image of my poster for the *Tom Joad* tour.

"After the show, I was telling that to his wife, Patti. She said, 'Have you ever met my husband?' And I said, 'Hell, no, I've never met your husband.' My wife and I are sitting there eating Doritos in the sour cream dip backstage at the Ryman, and the next thing I know Springsteen is standing there in front of me, as generous and as kind as he can be.

"And the years go by, and then the telephone rings, and I'm asked to design the new Springsteen cover, along with the folks that Bruce trusts so much, [designer] Harry and [art director] Sandy Choron."

Sherraden has been asked by his collaborators, and not unexpectedly, to keep much of the subsequent design process confidential. "We worked in tandem together," he says carefully, "and we went through some changes, of course."

REGARDLESS, HIS TWO initial impulses anchored the design: "One, get the stars that were used on the original Elvis Presley poster from 1956 on that CD cover. And, two, have a mathematical sense to the typography equaling Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band together."

The red background texture comes from a waste sheet used to register (line up) a reprint of a 1922 Vanderbilt v. Michigan football poster. "It takes a long time to get that rascal registered," Sherraden says, "and so I have to play with the paper. Since I'm a little bit on the frugal side, I used the same paper [a second time], and this wonderful, wonderful line came through there, along with the lighter red. I thought, 'There—that's Springsteen's cover.' And I worked very hard at getting the N in 'New York' right on the red. That's the eye right there, that's the bingo."

The cover's final component, the lettering that spells "L-I-V-E" alongside Neal Preston's photograph of Bruce and Clarence, says much for the layers of meaning Sherraden labored to invest in the cover, for it is a font that was not original to the Hatch archive.

Much of the identifiable letterpress quality in Hatch's work, in fact, is a consequence of their reliance on old, worn type. In the heyday of letterpress printing, that type would have been replaced with sharper characters, and its distressed quality—desirable today—would have been considered bad printing. Today it would take some doing to find freshly minted fonts, and, anyway, Sherraden is loath to tamper with the shop's archival qualities.

But every once in a while he adds a font. "The oldest African-American printing company in Nashville went out of business," he says. "We've known them for years. I always had my eye on this type that they had just chucked under their desk. And I said, 'I'll give you $50 for it, and I'll give it a good home.' And they said, 'OK.' So I bought that type from Darden Printing three years ago, and I've always wanted to use it on a CD cover.

"So the stars come from Elvis, the L-I-V-E comes from an African-American printing company, and this is our tribute to all their hard work. The rest of the typography comes from the archive of Hatch Show Print."

Sherraden is still at work on a cover for the DVD version of the Madison Square Garden concert. Hatch also produced about 1000 posters of the album artwork for record stores and fans. "I did 125 embellishments with watercolors," Sherraden adds, "on my hands and knees in front of the washer and dryer at my home. And I missed a lot of Andy Griffith shows. But the next thing I know, Springsteen had signed one of my special monoprints and sent it back to me."

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A

JOB TO BE DONE

AN INTERVIEW WITH BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

"Interview mode" is not really a part of Bruce Springsteen's makeup. And during the E Street Band's 1999-2000 reunion tour, he was particularly quiet, granting no formal interviews and limiting his comments to precious few backstage encounters with reporters. But prior to the release of *Live in New York City,* Springsteen broke his code of silence with what, for him, was a downright press blitz. What follows is the transcript from an interview Detroit-based music journalist and *Backstreets* contributor **GARY GRAFF** conducted with Springsteen for the Reuters news syndicate, in which Springsteen talks about the tour, the ties that bind the E Street Band together, the new songs he played on the road, and his future plans for the band.

Let's take the most obvious thing first; what's your hindsight perspective on reuniting the E Street Band?

Springsteen: I guess the nicest thing about it was we were able to reconstitute the band as an ongoing sort of creative unit. That process was probably the thing that was the hardest; we were initially concerned not only that the band was as good as it was in the past, but that we then had to bring in other things, and more.

So it wasn't just a party, in other words.

Oh, I think that it was a great time for all of us. It's probably one of the few bands where everybody's alive, and everybody's healthy, and all the relationships are intact. I think we got to a place where everybody realizes that this is a very singular thing—this is a very unique thing, this group of people playing together in this fashion—and that we created something together that was a big, big part of our own lives and a big part of our audience's lives. We wanted to live up to that thing, and we wanted to continue to serve in the fashion that we served before with our audience. Those were the critical issues when we got together to come out on the road, and they were things you weren't really going to know the answers to until you got out and played. We knew the band was going to play well and that everybody's commitment was stronger than ever and people were excited. It was exciting just to be onstage with those people again; it was a lot of fun standing next to Steve, standing next to Clarence, and to realize that that thing alone had great meaning for our audience and for me, in my life. I wanted to share that thing. I had young kids come up to me on the street and say, "We're big fans"—they were like 23 or 24—"but we've never seen you play with the band." And, hey, I wanted my kids to see it; they had never seen it before, and I wanted them to see the E Street Band.

Continued next page

THE RECORD RELEASE: MIDNGHT MADNESS AT JACK'S MUSIC SHOPPE

JOSEPH DELCONZO PHOTO

So what did they think?

Basically, they think we're big showoffs! *[Laughs]* But it was nice, because my kids were young, so they'd really only had a memory of me playing acoustically. Before we toured I played them a few of the videos, and they were just getting to an age where it really started to register with them a little bit. So they came to rehearsal, and they saw the band, and that was one of the great things about it—my kids got to know Clarence, they got to know Steve, they got to know Nils, Danny, Roy. It was, "These guys are Daddy's best friends. These are the people that I spent such an enormous part of my life with, and we made something together that was very special." And so they got to see that, and to see Patti and me alongside one another. It was nice.

What led you to decide this was the time to bring the band back together?

I wasn't sure, y'know; I think it was something that was so strong inside for so long. I came off the road after the *Tom Joad* tour, and I had some acoustic music, and I thought of making another record like that. But I hadn't worked with the E Street Band for a long time, that part of me that played in just a real, hard-rocking band that was very physical. I said, "Well, if I'm going to do that again, I think I want to do it now."

Did anyone still hold a grudge from the end of the band in '89?

Not really, no. I'm sure they didn't like it, but there wasn't really that kind of [angry] feeling. I think you go through a lot of things over the years, just a lot of ups and downs. It's hard to explain how the band actually works like that. All the relationships sustained over the years; throughout the whole ten years that we didn't work together, you're seeing the guys here and there. We called everybody to work on *Greatest Hits,* and everybody said "Yeah," figured their schedules out and just enjoyed being in the studio together. I think we've had such a long history; I think that over a long period of time, the totality of our relationships has been so positive. We've done so much for each other in so many different ways that it was just a part of the whole thing.

And everybody certainly seemed to be thrilled to be together during the tour.

I couldn't say that the relationships we had on this tour could've been any better. I think people came back together; maybe it's just a part of getting older or it was just a recognition that, hey, this person's unique. That every person on the stage is very singular and we do something that is very unique together. And I think that unspoken recognition was a part of the resolution of whatever feelings someone might have had from that particular time: just that everyone knew when we got together in that room, there was that extra recognition of everyone's place, of everyone's contribution and dedication going from one to another.

Ever regret or second-guess the decision to split up the group?

No. I enjoyed the time in-between. I enjoyed the different experiences I had, with the different band and the acoustic tour. That was a big, big thrill for me. But there was a tremendous fulfillment with playing and being alongside those people, the guys in the band, again.

It really seemed to resonate, too, that this was—as you

put it—a "rededication" of the E Street Band. That's something people have been wanting to hear for a long time.

Yeah, well, I felt the band was more powerful than ever, and to have sort of re-found the band in the present and saying, "Oh yeah, this is a job we have to continue to do. There's a job to be done," and then also to feel the way the band changes the way that I work, internally, the songs that I write. They affect the way those songs take shape and the way that I present those songs to my audience. Having that influence, I think I wrote a couple—the two songs that are on the record are two songs I would not have written if I had not been playing with the band and dealing with those ideas and those issues and going from town to town and trying to continue to define what our band was about and meant to be about. It was a big experience, just very satisfying.

And fraught with a bit of danger, too, because you had a reputation to live up to.

That's true. Because of our history, it brings a lot of... responsibility. You had to be very thoughtful about it. And I was concerned; I didn't want it to be static in any fashion. I didn't want to just say "Well, we have these songs and we're going to come out and we're going to run through them." That was something I didn't want to happen.

So where did you start?

When we first got together, the first thing we did was play a lot of unfamiliar material, a lot of things from *Tracks*. And we re-arranged some songs we had, like the new arrangement of "Youngstown," just things I felt allowed us to come out and the audience would feel at home, but yet we would be speaking in a slightly different language—where they would come and they would feel both the kind of intensity and commitment that I think people had come to expect from us, and yet they weren't hearing quite what they heard before. That was something we struggled with. We created a subtle setlist that had a narrative that runs through it that's everything I had been writing about and singing about and thinking about for my whole career. And then we'd bring it right into the present with "Land of Hope and Dreams" and "American Skin." So that emotional narrative was something we wanted to protect and make sure was an essential part of the show and give people an idea not just of who we are but who we are right now. The show was going to have to carry the ten or 12 years we hadn't played together, and the band was going to have to find its place in the present. Those were the really important issues I think we were working with at the beginning of the tour. We found our way through them, and I think the nice thing at the end was that I felt that it was a re-dedication of the band, and the band re-found itself and re-found the job we do, for the fans and for ourselves. It was a very present experience for me and for the guys, and hopefully for the audience. That was our intent for the tour, anyway.

What were some of the different elements you were able to insert immediately?

I knew we'd come up with a lot of nice turns on what we've been doing. First of all, Nils came in and learned the steel guitar in the month before we went out to play. It was amazing; it's a very complicated instrument, and this guy was so dedicated he went out and he learned to play the steel guitar literally right before the tour. So we had that to use, and that was a sound we didn't have before. And then we had the re-arrangement of "Youngstown," and we re-arranged "The River," and we were doing a lot of different things that were going to recast and let people re-hear some of the music we've made. We picked things off *Tracks* that weren't particularly familiar, like a song like "My Love..." That should have been on the *Born in the U.S.A.* record; I don't know why it got left off. It was one of those things we pulled out in the first rehearsal and went *"Whoa...* The band is really playing this well and this has a lot to say with what we're trying to do right now."

Another big change was doing the show without an intermission. Why?

That's 'cause I thought it was going to be shorter. *[Laughs]* I said, "You know what? It's gonna be shorter, and we're gonna have no intermission." And after looking back on it, I said, "Gee, why did we have an intermission all those years?" I found it to be a lot more enjoyable without the intermission. The show ended up stretching out, of course, as it tends to do on certain nights. But it felt right this time out. I'd certainly continue to do that again. That was a big plus for me.

THE TWO NEW SONGS ON THE RECORD ARE TWO SONGS I WOULD NOT HAVE WRITTEN IF I HAD NOT BEEN PLAYING WITH THE BAND.

Your "advanced" age didn't seem to slow you down much, either.

Yeah, it still bends. *[Laughs]* It was fun; the show was always very physical. I've had people ask me, "Wow, wasn't that really, really hard?" I said it was as hard as it used to be to do it, but it wasn't any harder. It was always kind of hard, but I wouldn't say it was any harder on this particular tour than on any of the others.

Define what you mean by "that job" that you do.

I guess you'd say we've devised a language by which we assist ourselves and our audience in making sense of the world and their lives, and in finding both our and their place in the world. What my favorite movies, my favorite pieces of art, my favorite music always did for me was that in some fashion the artist says, "Okay, take this and go, go find your place out there." It's a passing-on of energy and of thought. I think that the basic idea is to enhance understanding or to just pull you out to say "Hey, you're not alone, I'm not alone." I think that it's pretty clearly stated in the middle of "Tenth Avenue"—the River of Life. That was the centerpiece for the entire tour in some fashion. It was one where we actually come out during the middle of that song and say what we're doing, say what our intentions are. We say why we're here on this very particular night and what this very particular night means, and we say what our ambitions are and what we hope to accomplish and what we want to do on that particular evening, and what we hope to do with and for you. That's the trip we're trying to take our audience on, and that's always been the case.

That's a bit of a change, because it's a message you've generally allowed to be implied by your performances rather than stated so clearly.

I know. There's something about that version of "Tenth Avenue"... We come out kind of half-joking and, of course, half-serious, and kind of spell it out. And I think that's what people come to the show for;

they want to be lifted up and grounded at the same time. The band is idealistic, and yet it deals regularly with the world as it stands, and in the end hopefully we open up possibilities and the idea of possible worlds for our audience that we created. And at the same time, we tell 'em to take whatever it is we've exchanged that night and go deal with the world as it stands and find their place in it. That's how I see what we do out there. And we get you to dance and sweat and have fun—that's a central part of it, also.

Well, there are lots of religious conventions that ascribe to a theory that what lifts you up can also ground you.

Oh yeah; it should. In our music, the two elements that back up one another are blues and gospel music. If you listen to our music, the verses, that's the blues; go to "The Promised Land" or "Land of Hope and Dreams" and go to the verses, and that's the blues. When you get to the chorus, that's the gospel. That's gospel music. You connect those two things together, and you're both lifting people up and you're grounding them at the same time. That's kind of how we've worked over the years.

"Land of Hope and Dreams" was, of course, the first new song to arrive for the tour. How did that come about?

Right before we played the first show in Asbury Park, I said "Gee, I'd like one new song—one really new song. I'd had that title sitting in a notebook; I might have had a few lines or something, but it was the presence of the band and what we were about to do that sort of sends you home to find a way to summon, once again, your intentions of the job you're about to do, the service you're trying to perform for your audience. So that song, through just being with the band, just the fact I knew they were there to deliver this in a particular way—that was a song I wouldn't have written the same way otherwise. And once we had that, we said, "Okay, that sounds pretty good. I think it's gonna be good. Where are we gonna put it?" "I dunno." And somehow it was: "Let's play it last?" "Last? Ooh, I dunno...." But we played it, and it summed up the whole evening, and it settled the band immediately in the present and it contextualized a lot of the rest of the show. It was a nice thing to have, and it was a very identifiable part of the entire tour. We played it almost every night.

IN OUR MUSIC, THE TWO ELEMENTS ARE BLUES AND GOSPEL MUSIC. THE VERSES, THAT'S THE BLUES... THE CHORUS, THAT'S THE GOSPEL.

What about "American Skin?"

Because a lot had been written about the case in magazines and newspapers, I was just setting out to basically continue writing about things that I'd written about for a long period of time, which is: who we are, what's it mean to be an American, what's going on in the country that we live in? It was an extension of a lot of my other work.

Were you surprised at the controversy it created?

Well, I think that it dealt very directly with race, and that's a subject that pushes a lot of buttons in America. But I was surprised that there were so many people willing to comment so quickly about something they've never heard. That was just something really puzzling to me, 'cause we'd only played the song once, in Atlanta, and there was no recorded version of it. I don't think some of the people who were commenting on it were running to Napster to hear it, y'know? So there was a lot of misrepresentation and comment about something I don't think a lot of people had heard, and the song wounded up being misrepresented by quite a few people.

You've had some of your songs misinterpreted before, particularly "Born in the U.S.A." How do you keep from being gun-shy?

I was confident in the song itself. I said, "Hey, you go out and you sing it," and it should stand on its own. It was asking some questions that are hanging very heavy in the air right now. We have a large part of the population, people of color in the United States, who are viewed through a veil of criminality, who have been used to having their full citizenship denied, having their full Americanship denied. that was the idea of the title, "American Skin." Those are things that I think people are thinking about right now, as they should. It's one of the issues America is going to have to face in the next century.

It also came in the middle of a presidential campaign, which is always a poignant kind of time, anyway.

You're supposed to remain interested in the world, and my job has always been to put you in somebody else's shoes and have you walk a while in those shoes. You're out there and you feel what's in the air out there and you feel what's on people's minds. I think "Streets of Philadelphia" did that. People are looking for ways to have a dialogue about these issues and these ideas. They're looking for ways to try to get a handle and make sense of what's happening, and I think that music and film and art has a service to perform in that fashion.

The big question—what happens to the E Street Band now?

Individually, the guys are all doing different things; some guys are playing, and they've gone back to the things they've done. Steve has his acting. Patti's working on her record again; she's got a lot of great songs, so that's exciting. But, also, we did some recording. We recorded for a weekend: a lot of the newer songs that we played towards the end of the tour, a couple of things I wrote with Joe Grushecky, and some things that I had. We just kind of cracked the process of beginning to make a studio record. I think what we'd like to do is make a studio record and do some more playing. I'd like to go out and play a little bit more with some new songs. I might have some other records I'd like to finish and get out, but I think right now we're going to probably do some recording and try to get a record together.

Any sense of a timetable for that project?

Well, it's always wrong! *[Laughs]* I'm always wrong; it usually takes longer than I think, but hopefully... I have quite a few songs written, so hopefully it won't be some drawn-out recording process like some of our other records have been. I don't think it will be. But we're not really locked into any time frame; the nice thing about where we're at at this point is we're pretty free to do whatever we want. We can go out and play for a little bit if we want to; we don't have to have a record out. We can make a record and go out and play. We have a lot of freedom to just make our music and enjoy the band and the fact that it's

LIZ ACKERMAN OF MANALAPAN, NJ, GETS THE ULTRA-LIMITED EDITION *LIVE IN NEW YORK* CITY PACKAGE

JOSEPH DELCONZO PHOTO

there and is as vital as it is. I can't express the amount of enjoyment that gave me; to be able to play like we did the past year was just a really, really very meaningful thing for me. So hopefully we'll have some good new music for our audience, and we'll do some more playing.

You mention other albums you'd like to do. What are those?

I've got an acoustic record, probably half of it, at least; I'm certainly going to want to do that again at some point. Then I've had a record that I've had for quite awhile—just some looping rhythm tracks and things that were slightly different—I've got half of that, and I'd like to finish that at some point. I probably say this every time I do interviews and I never quite get to them. *[Laughs]* I've just got a lot of music sitting around, things I'd like to finish at some point. I think the central thing for me right now is I'd really like to make a record with the band, because there's just something... It's a different thought process when I think about writing for that group of musicians. I tend to be more direct in some ways. I expand my scope in some fashion. It's something about what the band is, after all these years, that makes me think a little bit different. So I'm excited about doing that.

Will "Live in New York City" be coming out on home video?

Yeah, at some point it'll come out, the DVD and the video... hopefully not too far into the future. And we'll have a chance to include things that didn't make it onto the HBO show.

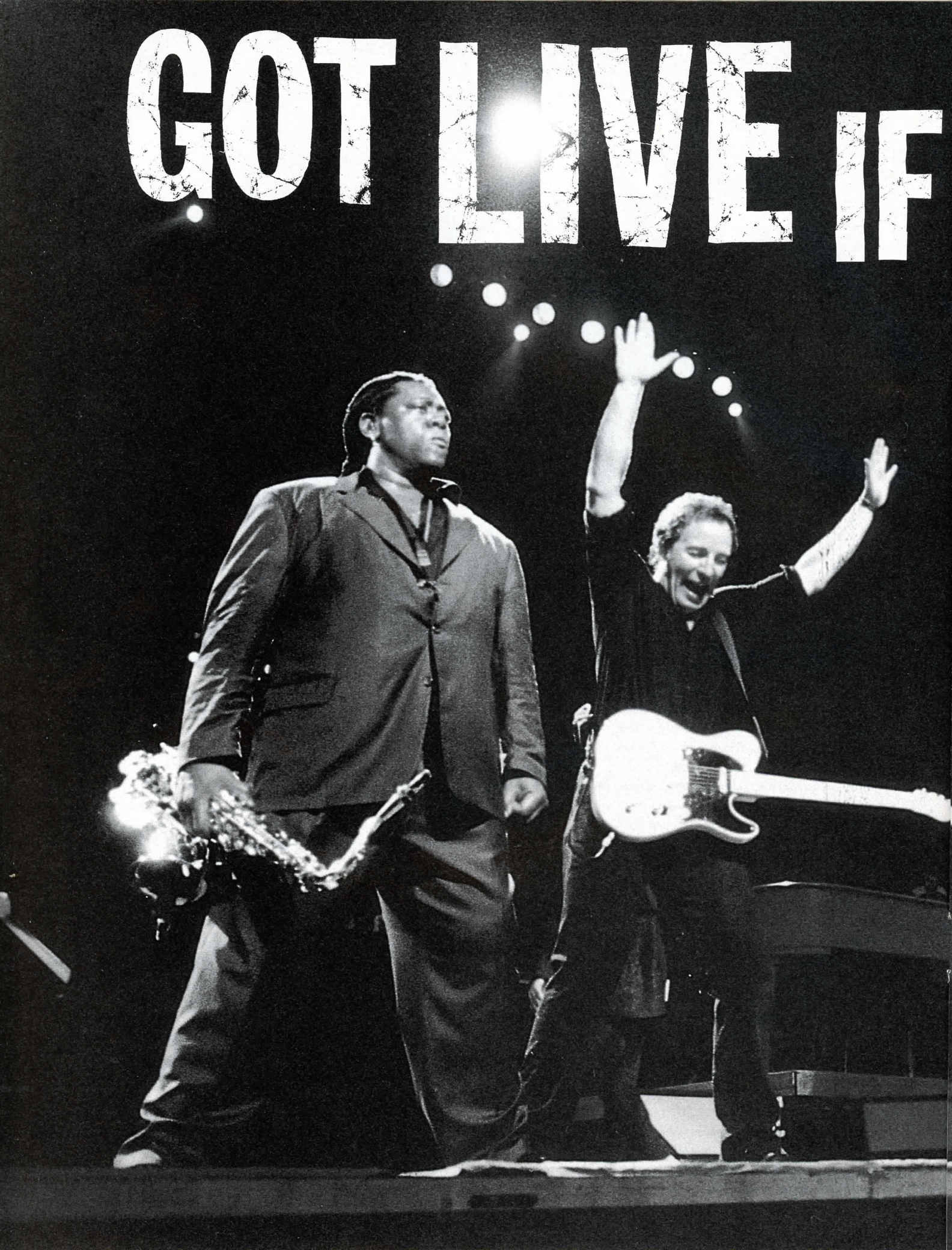
IN THE MIDNIGHT HOUR
JACK'S MUSIC SHOPPE, RED BANK, NJ

It just past midnight, in the wee hours of April 3—just a few minutes after *Live in New York City* went on sale—when Springsteen walked in the back door of Jack's Music Shoppe. Roughly 300 fans who couldn't wait another night for the new album had come to the store in Red Bank—expecting fellow fans, sure, expecting lines, maybe, but not expecting this.

"My jaw just dropped," store manager Chris Van Orden told Kelly-Jane Cotter of the *Asbury Park Press:* "I mean, he comes in here a lot and usually it's just, 'Hi, how're you doing,' but this was the last thing I expected, for him to walk into the middle of mayhem."

Van Orden wasn't the only one. "I thought I was hallucinating," fan Thomas Bernardo told *Backstreets.* "But what does he do? He hops up on the sales counter, has a pen in his hands, and says, "Hey guys, if everyone pulls out their CD booklet, we'll get those things signed for ya!'" Bruce signed, joked, shook hands, even talked on some of those damn cell phones. Well over an hour later, Springsteen wasn't leaving until he was sure everyone had something autographed.

Bruce told one interviewer: "When the record came out? Oh, I went down to the record store! It was one of those things—in Red Bank, New Jersey, anyway, they open the store late at night. We'd been in California for a week, so I was on California time. So I went down and signed some records and talked to some of the fans and things. It was fun. It's just, you know, it's just saying hi. There's a lot of people, so you're not having extended conversations, but it's just a hello and thanks for your support and all that stuff." For a few hundred fans, "all that stuff" made for a night they'll never forget. —*Christopher Phillips*


GOT LIVE IF

YOU WANT IT!

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & THE E STREET BAND

Live In New York City
(Columbia Records)

Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band
(HBO broadcast)

BY FRED MILLS

Hindsight may be 20/20, but you can't get there from here with it. Instinct being what it is, then, I think that the *Backstreets* editorial comments in #70 about the live album and HBO special were pretty dead on: this project *does* feel like faith rewarded. It bears all the hallmarks of classic Bruce—which is to say, there's depth, there's purpose, and above all, there's *message*.

First things first. When Sony initially announced the track listing for the 2-CD set, internet fan groups lit up over what was missing, so let's clear up one thing: the album is not intended as a blow-by-blow reproduction of an E Street Band concert. The final Madison Square Garden show ran well over three hours, while the in-home presentation is only 14 songs and about two hours, not counting the album's bonus tracks. (In a fluky twist, reviewers who obtained advance promos of the album heard it *sans* "Born to Run," which was only added to commercial copies at the last minute—and even then, placed out of sequence at the end of disc one instead of where it's found on the HBO special, after "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out.")

Right off, then, the question arises, what did Springsteen have in mind with this set? Clearly he wasn't concerned with usurping the bootleggers' turf; virtually every date from the tour is in underground circulation, and one bootleg label, Crystal Cat, issued a professional three-disc edition of the entire July 1 show titled *Legendary Night*.

Another strategy Springsteen passed on was to mount a comprehensive tour anthology modeled on the earlier *Live/1975-85* box set, or even a "best-of" from the ten nights that would have spotlighted the many rarities he hauled out, not to mention the three other new songs ("Further On Up the Road," "Code of Silence," "Another Thin Line") performed during the Garden run.

Live in New York City is not a "greatest live hits" package, either, given the inclusion of two new songs and material from *Nebraska* and the *Tracks* boxed set. The only concessions are to consumer value: a gap separates "American Skin"—tellingly, "one minute of silence"—from six well-chosen bonus tracks, which then fill out disc two to a tidy 75 minutes.

As Springsteen albums have always been meticulously structured in an attempt to communicate meaning to the fans, this one, too, has its own internal logic. It comprises

DANNY CLINCH PHOTO

five distinct "movements," which I've labeled with my own *ad hoc* headings, in parentheses: "My Love Will Not Let You Down"/"Prove It All Night"/"Two Hearts" (The Power of Love, Faith and Camaraderie); "Atlantic City"/"Mansion On The Hill"/"The River" (Raised Hopes, Dashed Dreams); "Youngstown"/"Murder Incorporated"/"Badlands" (A Refusal To Lay Down); "Out in the Street"/"Tenth Avenue Freeze-out"/"Born to Run" (Celebration & Release); "Land of Hope and Dreams"/"American Skin" (Transcendence & Passage). Basically, Springsteen has distilled his show down to its essential philosophical core. These themes have frequently appeared in Springsteen's work over the years, and consistently so during the reunion tour. A songwriter's driving force, after all, is to set forth images, ideas and ideals with the hopes that his audience will, as Springsteen has suggested in interviews, glimpse themselves in his work and in turn grasp the larger connections—the ties that bind.

Those ties that bind are even more vividly evident on the documentary film. By the time Springsteen & Co. hit MSG, they were the most well-rehearsed garage band in the world, and it shows. As directed by Chris Hilson and edited by Thom Zimny, the concert film glows with a you-are-there *verite* crispness increasingly rare in the post-MTV era.

From the viewer's perspective, the filmmakers worked unobtrusively (one hardly detects any cameras or crew in the scenes) and remained faithful to the experience itself, only once employing effects, brief slo-mo superimpositions of band member close-ups near the end of "Land of Hope and Dreams." More crucially, the editing technique strives for economy, efficiency and rhythm. Cuts, pans and dissolves are deployed in sync with the music, each song forming a perfectly contained visual dynamic existing within the broader thematic context and overall concert flow. Some fans' comments notwithstanding, this is *not* your typical hip-hoppy MTV-style editing, although the flow of images certainly comes more swiftly than, say, a '70s concert documentary. In retrospect, a lot of old rock films lack those visual dynamics, and the "contemporary" look of the HBO film seems the perfect match to its "dynamic" subject. From long shots that establish the E Street Band staking out a simple white stage in a sea of constantly-moving fans, to intense close-ups of bandmembers' faces that reveal a swath of expressions and emotion (tiny grins, nods and glances exchanged, sweaty exertion), the film, with a loving, fluid grace, captures something that is precious and true.

Highlights are too abundant to list them all. Just a few: In "Prove It All Night" Bruce comes up with two new solos that reference but don't duplicate the familiar '78 version; there's a wonderful alternating shot between Bruce and Steve at the mic in the closing call-and-response segment. Steve does a killer Richard Nixon during "Two Hearts," while all the bandmembers mug shamelessly during "Out in the Street," and there's also a hilarious do-si-do dance from Clarence and Nils. Bruce leaps onto Roy's grand piano during the extended intro for "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out" and literally wrings drops of sweat from his black shirt. Later in the song, as Bruce is preaching the gospel, Steve, standing next to Patti, smirks or giggles; spotting them as he's walking in their direction Bruce simply adds the line, "I'm not bullshitting back here!" And near the end Bruce kneels over as the camera zooms in to catch him literally gasping for breath and grimacing at the exertion. In "Born to Run," band and audience are locked into a tandem groove that, as caught by a stage-rear camera rolling subtly up over the shoulders of the E Streeters then tilting down slightly into the crowd, is undeniably sensual—a visceral, physical moment of documentary cinema. Show a little faith, there's magic in the night, indeed.

In a very real sense, however, the most riveting moments arrive via the two new songs, "Land of Hope and Dreams" and "American Skin (41 Shots)." Their closing-concert positions are significant—in fact, the latter came earlier in the setlist but has been resequenced for album and film as the final song—suggesting that their author considers them definitive, culminating statements of what he's termed the "rededication" of the E Street Band, clearing the way for the future.

Stylistically, too, both tunes, while containing elements of classic Springsteen (from "Backstreets"-style anthemic grandeur to a serene, gospel-like vibe characteristic of latter-day Boss), are unique within the Springsteen oeuvre, a striking musical synthesis whose subject matter is the product of someone grown older, wiser and intensely reflective.

"Land of Hope and Dreams," of course, is about brotherhood and redemption, clearly descended from Woody Guthrie's folk populism and Curtis Mayfield's gospel soul. In concert, it's optimistic and uplifting, transforming the Garden into a joyous, all-inclusive tent revival.

"American Skin (41 Shots)," by contrast, is darker, more veiled, lined with tragedy, although not without its own glimmers of hope and dreams. Clarence, Nils, Steve and Patti each intone the words, "41 shots," then Bruce steps to the mic and admonishes the crowd, "We need some quiet." Bathed in blue light and extending one arm as if conjuring a spell, he waits a few measures, then edges into his invocation: "41 shots... and we'll take that ride...."

Partly concerning the Diallo incident, in the broader sense it, too, is about how we inevitably strive towards brotherhood and redemption even amid the undermining factors of paranoia and violence our culture fosters. Sings Bruce, "We're baptized in these waters and in each other's blood/...It ain't no secret/ No secret my friend/ You can get killed just for living/ In your American skin."

The band moves gracefully, riding a heartbeat bass rhythm and hymnal organ melody towards a thunderous climax featuring a startlingly angry guitar solo from Bruce. Clarence answers him, as if in reassurance, with a gentler sax solo, and the song slowly winds down as the film fades to black.

Viewing at home, if what you feel is a slight shiver, a catch in your throat, or perhaps even a tug of moisture at the corner of your eye, then the artist's journey towards an envisioning of meaning in our shared lives has been a fruitful one. Climb on board; the next stage is about to begin.

CARLOS BLANCO PHOTO

THIS IS A RECORDING. . . .

A live album is not a live concert—and that just may be why this one works. By Jimmy Guterman

Most live albums look backward. With few significant exceptions (Neil Young's *Time Fades Away,* Jackson Browne's *Running on Empty),* the point of a live album is to document a performer playing familiar tunes to an audience. There's room for reinterpretations of songs, some covers, and a couple of new tunes to make sure the record isn't just a holding pattern, but live albums usually aren't where fans go to figure out where a performer is going next. Many live albums are intended to fulfill a contractual obligation, deliver easily produced holiday product, or—as in this case—tie in with a film.

Ceci n'est pas un rock concert.

So Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band's *Live in New York City* serves what you'd expect: much of the core set played during the 1999-2000 tour. One can quibble about the sequencing and what's been left out. The strange placing of "Born to Run" and "American Skin (41 Shots)" do hurt the flow of the set, and we shouldn't be stuck with the soggy "Light of Day" from *In Concert* as the only officially released version of that key live number. But when the strongest negative comment you can make about more than two hours of music is about what's been left out, it's best to stop whining and enjoy. Some fans may wish that the collection had more rarities, or that Bruce released one complete night of the New York stand, preferably the July 1 date with "Blood Brothers." The desire for more rarities is understandable, but Bruce still has an audience more diverse than us crazies, and some of the one-shots during the Madison Square Garden run, like the wan "Dancing in the Dark," were experiments that deserve to be confined to bootlegs and MP3s.

The argument against a beginning-to-end-concert set is more complicated. Live records and live concerts are different forms. Lengthy speeches that can move you in person can seem bloated in the comfort of your own home (listen to "The River" from *Live/1975-85* for an example). More important, making records and giving concerts are entirely different endeavors. Anyone who's reading this has likely heard a number of complete-concert bootlegs, and I guarantee you that only the very lazy or those on a very long drive have ever listened to these three-CD sets from beginning to end in one sitting. Just as performers construct concerts differently from the way they program records, people listen to records differently from the way we listen at concerts. I don't care how good home-theater technology is getting, it's a different experience. Even diehard Pearl Jam fans who've emptied their savings to buy the many dozens of live albums might admit that a single collection with highlights would be acceptable if not ideal. As with Pearl Jam, the E Street Band sets didn't change that much during the tour.

So why does *Live in New York City* work so well, even divorced from the filmed version? It's the first Springsteen live record that isn't long and unfocused *(Live/1975-85),* short and unfocused *(Chimes of Freedom),* or a subpar performance with lackluster backing *(Plugged: In Concert).* Why has one of rock 'n' roll's greatest live performers released so many lousy live albums? It's not just Bruce: there's a long tradition in rock 'n' roll for greats like the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan to release live albums that don't capture what made the performers so undeniable onstage. Maybe it's the improvements in recording technology, maybe it's because the record was made at the triumphant end of the band's toughest tour since 1980-81, but much on these two discs is nothing less than thrilling. The more you listen to the set, the more the smaller moments—the way Bruce says "telly-vision" during the "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out" band introductions, the breakdown and buildup that climax "Atlantic City," the new lilt added to the guitar in "If I Should Fall Behind" during the New York stand—jump out and let you explore the performances in a way you can't get while the concert is happening or while listening to some amateur bootleg.

Fans can argue about how arrangements here differ from their studio predecessors. The country-based "Mansion on the Hill" here is sturdy, but it's not as powerful or overwhelming as the claustrophobic solo rendition on Nebraska. And the version of "The River" here is overlong, exploring and meandering until the band gives up and reverts to some semblance of the original studio arrangement, but it's a reasonable new way to approach a song they've played hundreds of times. Hey, it could have been worse—at least we don't have to hear Sting sing it, as he did during the "Human Rights Now" trek.

The two new songs suggest that even on this backward-looking record we may have something to look forward to. "Land of Hope and Dreams" and "American Skin (41 Shots)" are highlights, outstanding performances of songs that show that this songwriter and this band have much more to tell us if they choose to do so. (Although it took more than a year on the road to get more than one new song onstage.) When you listen to *Live in New York City* and you hear Danny toss in an unexpected flourish that's exactly right, Max drop in an extra snare shot that lifts a song off the ground, Garry add a new countermelody in the most unusual place, Bruce toy with his phrasing again and again, you can believe that at this late date, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band might be getting better together.

Jimmy Guterman lives and writes in Massachusetts. He last wrote for Backstreets *in 1985. He'll contribute again after another 16-year gap, roughly around the time* Tracks 2 *comes out.*

CHRISTOPHER PHILLIPS

GOT LIVE IF YOU WANT IT!
FANS SPEAK OUT

JOSEPH DELCONZO PHOTO

Let's just start by saying one thing about Springsteen's new live album. "Lost in the Flood" is awesome. This little beauty is worth the price of the package alone, and I'm sure it will have the same long-term effect on Bruce's fans as when he released "Incident on 57th Street" live in 1986, which resulted in that song coming high in reader's polls and ultimately getting a deserved come-back on the 1999-2000 tour. "Lost in the Flood" just about sums up perfectly what the reunion tour was about: old material being given a new lease on life in arrangements that far surpass anything that had been attempted before. I'd bet this will become a regular on any future tour with the E Street Band.

Julie Cooksey
via e-mail

I am 18 years old and I have to say it: this new album rocks. I had the luck to attend a few of those concerts in New York last summer, and I was left in awe. It wasn't just Bruce. It was *the band.* I feel bad that more kids my age weren't there to witness music powerful enough to rip your lungs through your chest and leave you begging for more. I popped the new album in yesterday, and I was brought back to MSG with a few of my high school buddies. I can think of few bands that come together with a magical sound and project it live these days. The Dave Matthews Band can do it, U2 can do it, the Who convinced us that they can still do it. But last summer, nobody did it better then the E Street Band.

If I had been alive in 1975 and somebody had asked me what the E Street Band is, I probably would have said "Listen to the song 'Born to Run' and you'll know exactly what they represent and stand for." But if somebody were to ask me now what the E Street Band is all about, I would not hesitate to tell them to listen to "Land of Hope and Dreams." The opening of this album captures the mind, the centerpiece rockers capture your heart, but "Land of Hope and Dreams" wins your soul. It is the E Street Band. The performance is bold and fearless, and Bruce's vocals are more soulful than ever before. I want to thank Roy, Clarence, Danny, Nils, Patti, Bruce, Garry, Stevie, and Max, for documenting such a magical performance, and inviting me to celebrate with them.

Steve Savage
Boston, MA

"Are You Alive?... Are You Alive?" Umm... *no,* because you faded out at a very intense moment that breaks up two songs that obviously go together, to just cram another song at the end of the CD. And what's with that annoying dead air between "41 Shots" and the rest of the tracks? It's great to have this music available, and I'm hoping for additional songs on the DVD. But please tell me they are going to re-release this CD in the future with all the necessary adjustments so this doesn't seem so "amateur." Or I'll just have to get a recordable CD player and put "Land of Hope and Dreams" at the end of the CD where it's supposed to be.

Warren M.
via e-mail

Let's start with the good thing: the sound is incredible. We've got clean versions of "Jungleland," "Lost in the Flood," and all the others. "The River" sounds even better than in concert. And finally we have "Land of Hope and Dreams" (play it loud!)... I won't complain about the song selection—it's a very good overview of the past tour.

Not okay is the amateurish sequencing. "Land of Hope and Dreams," "Born to Run," "American Skin" and "If I Should Fall Behind" have such silly placement that it makes me wanna scream! Everybody who saw a few shows will be highly disappointed that "Land of Hope and Dreams" doesn't close the record. The "intermission" between "American Skin" and the bonus tracks kills the great live feeling which has grown during the previous tracks. Who decided things like these? Even the craziest bootlegger wouldn't have done it that way! The whole thing gives me the impression of an poorly constructed live record—like *Live/75-85* and *Plugged.* Once more, we haven't got a concert document which does Springsteen's incredible shows justice.

What saves this set for me is the pure enjoyment of playing all these great performances in fantastic sound quality—but that's all. It is not the kind of live album artists like Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band deserve. Maybe next time.

Michael Meineke
Bodenwerder, Germany

I love all my old bootlegs—and I don't feel too bad for having them, since I've purchased every "legal" Bruce release from the Columbia/Sony family of stars ever pressed. But when "My Love Will Not Let You Down" began pounding through the speakers, I felt like I was really back in the Garden. Sharp as a Chris Rock one-liner. Clear as new pair of Ray-Bans. Tougher than the rest. Once again, thanks Bruce.

Larry Thompson
via e-mail

Live In New York City is not exactly a gift from the gods, but it does make good on its promises. This is an album that must work on at least five different levels. First, convert those who still are not Springsteen disciples. Second, allow Springsteen to recall someday that when he was 50, he and the band could he still kick some ass. Third, give diehard fans some new material or classic rarities. Fourth, provide the audio companion to the HBO concert special. And lastly, throw a satisfying scrap to keep hungry fans content while Springsteen vacillates about a new studio album. *Live* ably serves all these audiences and purposes.

As a stand-alone live album to be listened to, the song selection is disappointing. These are inspiring performances, but the CD never truly conveys the range of emotion and pacing of a live Springsteen show. Springsteen's concerts are just as powerful for his stirring ballads as his bellowing anthems,

and adding a few more quiet but no-less-thrilling songs that were performed on these nights (including "The Promise" or "Blood Brothers") would have given the album more heart to offset the volume. These concerts were defined by Springsteen's consistent passion and commitment, and that raw power does exude throughout all of *Live In NYC.* It's just that the album could have packed more of his varied charisma, which is Springsteen's true gift. Maybe one day he'll make a live album as good as his bootleggers do.

James Turano
Chicago, IL

I'm not a big fan of live albums to begin with, but out of a sense of obligation to all things Bruce I eventually bought it. It sat on my shelf for about three weeks before I took it in the car for something different to listen to. It took me three or four listens, and as with most things good it started to grow on me. I don't how many times I've run from the car straight to the VCR with the HBO special I taped to see the version of "Prove It All Night," "Youngstown," or "Two Hearts" that I had just listened to. I have to say, *Live in NYC* is one of the finest live albums I've ever heard. I'm not spoiled by the bootlegs, which I've steered clear of, so this stuff is just incredible to me. The energy expended by Bruce and the gang three songs in would probably floor most young bands today. Steve saying "Boss Time!" before Bruce rips into that cool guitar solo on "Ramrod" makes me shiver. Bruce and Steve playing off one another during "Prove It All Night" and "Two Hearts" is what rock 'n' roll is all about. This live album even had me digging out *Darkness* and *Born to Run* after a long time. And you know what? I can honestly say I don't know which "Prove It All Night" is better, live or studio!

Kevin Jeffers
Toronto, Ontario

WHERE ARE MAX'S LEGS?

I work in marketing and have a very good design department, and it's incredibly apparent on the band picture (especially on the large poster that I have in my office) that Max was Photoshopped in.....

David Billotti
New York, NY

One would have thought that when the best live act on the planet releases any sort of live album, it would by default be an album to die for. The sad fact is that *Live in New York City* fails in several key areas, and in many respects is inferior to some of the best bootlegs from the tour.

The main problems with *Live in NYC* are a couple of key songs missing ("Thunder Road" and "Light of Day") and the chopped-up order in which the existing songs are presented. These may seem like minor quibbles to anyone who isn't a huge fan already (and will buy the thing anyway), but the fact remains that two songs that were played every night of the tour have been dropped. Of course, there is a limit to how far a simple CD can recreate the magic of a real live concert; but *Live in NYC* could have recreated a lot more than it does. Hopefully the album will win Bruce some new fans who have no idea that they are listening to a "mutilated" concert, but if a few extra songs had been added, and songs had been put in their "right" places, the result would have been much better overall, and would have lost nothing.

"Born to Run" was clearly added at the very last minute, and there seems to be speculation as to whether the six "bonus" songs at the end of disc two were added at the next-to-last minute. This is a Bruce Springsteen album, something which will exist forever. It will form part of his legacy alongside the other albums, like *Born to Run, Tunnel of Love* and *Human Touch.* Bruce Springsteen albums should not be made at the last minute. A Bruce Springsteen live album should not have to stoop to be a soundtrack to a TV program that does not do the tour justice.

Magnus Lauglo
via e-mail

I love the packaging on the new album. Nice, effective, and simple: not fussy or overloaded with images or information, a concise written review of the band on the eve of their NYC stand, lyrics to the two new songs, liner notes which include reference to the snippets of the covers played within "Tenth Avenue" and "Two Hearts." But it's the color scheme that intrigues me most. It's mostly yellow/gold with hints of red, which is suggestive of a blood-stained flag—especially with bits of stars and the odd stripe here and there.

The CD has taken a lot of flak for its messy composition. However, it is purely a victim of the conflicting priorities and interests. The HBO show is the driver here. Bruce wants the set to tell a story, and that is best done through the original 13-track selection. He couldn't get this onto one disc, so had to fill up the second disc with extra tracks, then found some more room at the end of the first disc and managed to squeeze "Born to Run" on. Let's not forget, this is no attempt to replicate a full show; I think it's a summation of the tour, and it only looks awkward because many of us are familiar with full shows on bootlegs.

Mike Reeves
Birmingham, England

A drawback to live albums is that you sometimes get the feeling that something is missing; you feel like maybe you had to have been there to appreciate it. Not so with this offering. If anything, this record enhances rather than detracts from the actual concert experience. You can hear those beautiful harmony vocals in "If I Should Fall Behind," experience the explosive guitar solos offered by Springsteen and Nils Lofgren (a real virtuoso), without having jackasses hollering in your ear and spilling beer on your clothes.

Rick Barreau
via e-mail

Like all Springsteen albums, *Live in New York City* has a theme; this time, redemption delivered at the hands of a vigilant commitment to ideals that are consistently challenged in the "real" world. The album is simply flawless in its documentation of the spiritual experience that was this band in concert on that tour. Standards are reworked and re–invigorated, rarities peek through, and new songs are debuted. Of these, the sublime "Land of Hope and Dreams" represents its writer's apotheosis; that Springsteen can perform a song detailing a land where "dreams will not be thwarted, faith will be rewarded" and, through the strength and passion of his performance, make us believe that such a land exists, is a testament not only to his ability to elevate and inspire, but to rock 'n' roll's as a whole. This is as good as it gets.

Jeffrey Miers
via e-mail

YOU WERE MISSING

Live in New York City presents the material from the concert film—it's almost notorously considered a soundtrack—along with six additional bonus tracks from the same two nights. But even with those gracious additions, *Live in NYC* is still not the full picture from June 29 and July 1—this one-fifth of the Madison Square Garden stand—not to mention the entire tour. Of course, it'd take a double-digit CD set to capture every one of the 111 songs played on the E Street Band's 15-month haul. And while some aspiring CD-burner out there may be creating just that at this very moment, we'll narrow our sights for now. Much material remains from the professionally captured final two nights as potential B-sides or bonus tracks. As hopes escalate for an upcoming DVD, here's a reminder of the songs performed on June 29 and July 1 that remain M.I.A.—just itching, we imagine, to come on out of the vault.

Code of Silence
The Ties That Bind
Darkness on the Edge of Town
My Hometown
The Promised Land
Another Thin Line
The Promise
The E Street Shuffle
Backstreets
Light of Day
This Hard Land
Bobby Jean
Growin' Up
Further On Up the Road
Thunder Road
Blood Brothers

GOT LIVE IF YOU WANT IT! CRITICS WEIGH IN

All reviews have been edited for length by Backstreets. *We've tried to preserve each writer's general take, but bear in mind that these are snippets, better understood in the context of their original reviews. Here's a sampler of the critical response:*

...Like a lot of religious experiences, this one isn't easily recaptured. But in lieu of a return to the mountaintop, *[Live in New York City]* will do. Considering that Springsteen is revered as the greatest stage performer rock has ever known, it's surprising that it took him three tries at a concert album to get it right.... With half the 20 tracks dating back to '79 or before, this could've ended up seeming like the *River* tour souvenir that never was. But there's surprisingly little sense of nostalgia tripping, and that's a miracle in itself....

Springsteen's aim is nothing less than to remind us of our lost capacity for joy, and for two and a half hours you may find that you require less nudging than you'd figured. It's not just the hokey idea of faith in the restorative powers of rock that he's peddling. In the closing bonus track, "If I Should Fall Behind," which features almost the entire E Street Band trading lead vocals, he's preaching the idea of basic companionship as a heroic virtue. You want elevation? The buoyant *Live in New York City* may convince you that heaven is a place where—sorry, Bono—at least one street does have a name.

Chris Willman
Entertainment Weekly

LIVE IN NYC TRACK LIST	SOURCE 6/29/00	SOURCE 7/1/00	LIVE RECORDING DEBUT
1. MY LOVE WILL NOT YOU DOWN		★	★
2. PROVE IT ALL NIGHT		★	★
3. TWO HEARTS		★	
4. ATLANTIC CITY		★	
5. MANSION ON THE HILL		★	★
6. THE RIVER		★	
7. YOUNGSTOWN	★		★
8. MURDER INCORPORATED		★	
9. BADLANDS	★		
10. OUT IN THE STREET		★	★
11. BORN TO RUN		★	
1. TENTH AVENUE FREEZE-OUT	★	★	
2. LAND OF HOPE AND DREAMS		★	★
3. AMERICAN SKIN (41 SHOTS)		★	★
4. LOST IN THE FLOOD		★	★
5. BORN IN THE U.S.A.		★	
6. DON'T LOOK BACK	★		★
7. JUNGLELAND	★		★
8. RAMROD		★	★
9. IF I SHOULD FALL BEHIND	★		

...A few concert standards merely rehash Springsteen's glory days ("Prove It All Night," "Jungleland"), while some of the new arrangements struggle to better the originals (the moody intro and coda that cause "The River" to meander, the lengthy band introductions that bloat "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out").

But revelations abound: Max Weinberg's demon drumming turns "My Love Will Not Let You Down," an early-'80s leftover, into a rampaging opener; "Two Hearts" allows duet partners Springsteen and Steven Van Zandt to pay homage to the Marvin Gaye-Kim Weston Motown classic "It Takes Two"; Nils Lofgren's six-string rave-up drops a bomb on the relatively sedate studio version of "Youngstown"; and the slide-guitar voicings on a stark, howling "Born in the U.S.A." evoke both the Far East and Mississippi. These performances make *Live in New York City* more than just a souvenir of a nostalgia tour; it's a document of a great combo still burning to outdo itself.

Greg Kot
Rolling Stone

Bruce Springsteen's *Live in New York City* is a predictably magnificent concert recording. This two-CD set, taped last summer, reminds us that Springsteen is the most heroic composer in modern pop music and demonstrates that the E Street Band can still galvanize his songs into rock-and-roll epiphanies....

[C]ynics can point to a paucity of fresh material.... But the music itself keeps the faith. Springsteen combats banality by juxtaposing songs from different points in his career and giving other tunes strikingly different arrangements. For example, the first six songs are grouped into a pair of thematic triptychs, the first a feisty declaration of fidelity to family and friends ("My Love Will Not Let You Down," "Prove It All Night" and "Two Hearts"), the second a poignant exegesis on blue-collar dreams and desperation ("Atlantic City," "Mansion on the Hill" and "The River"). Then the band takes off into incandescence, catalyzed by a blistering guitar solo by Nils Lofgren on the erstwhile ballad "Youngstown"....

Britt Robson
Washington Post

You know the cliché: You haven't heard Bruce until you've heard him live. There are better documents of Springsteen's rock 'n' roll tent revivals out there—try the 1986 box set, for starters. But the double disc *Live in New York City*... is a worthy glimpse into Springsteen's 1999-2000 reunion tour with his E Street Band....

For all the musical heat, however, this was a pair of concerts that wound up attracting attention less for their entertainment value than for their political sideshows. Chalk it up to "American Skin (41 Shots)".... Cops protested and boycotted the show; Springsteen charged ahead with his performance.

Don't let the noisy rancor fool you: "American Skin," as presented here, isn't much more than a limp noodle of a song, possessing neither the haunting, elegiac atmosphere its proponents have praised nor the knee-jerk self-righteousness its detractors have bemoaned.... With its 19 songs and generally upbeat mood, *Live in New York City* is something of a greatest-hits live album—fun, spirited and not nearly as dangerous as some would have had you believe last summer.

Brian McCollum
Detroit Free Press

...Although it's absolutely impossible to ever fully capture the feel and the emotions that come with a Springsteen concert on any recording, *Live in New York City* does a remarkable job of doing so.... What also makes the recording special is that although the performances are tight and always on target, it's still somewhat raw. The backing vocals are just that—backing vocals—not always pristine harmonies, and despite E Street's legendary status, you feel you're listening to a real a rock 'n' roll band. And there are times when the moods and images created on by the music are so picturesque and cinematic, you feel you are indeed "Live in New York City."

Alan K. Stout
Wilkes-Barre Times-Leader

...[T]here's a huge difference between being at a live show and experiencing it second-hand on CD or TV a year later. Rather than a concert album and TV show with only two new songs not previously released, I'd rather have seen Springsteen, 51, put out a studio album of new material—and even the hardest of his hardcore fans would concur with that yen. It's been a long time—too long—since he dropped his last collection of new songs, *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, in 1995. To put out a live album six years later seems more like a ho-hum holding action than a major event.

Only the above analysis fails to consider a surprising fact. While Springsteen is famous for his live shows, and while there are countless black-market live recordings of them, *Live in New York City* is only his third official live release in a 30-year career. *Live in New York City* is actually something rare in the Springsteen canon.

More important to the undecided consumer, it is something good. Something very good. It is something that has the power—especially in TV form—to turn the blasé into Bossaholics, just like an actual Springsteen performance.

Larry Katz
Boston Herald

...[I]nstead of just cranking out one succinct hit after another, [Springsteen] reinvents songs and lets them unfold for as long as they stay interesting—which makes *Live in New York City* the rare concert album that actually merits a second listen. The knock against most live albums is they never break through the guess-you-had-to-be-there barrier. But at its best, *Live in New York City* captures plenty of the rock-till-you-drop energy that makes his shows with the E Street Band so magical....

Thor Christensen
Dallas Morning News

...Do the CDs, featuring more than 140 minutes of music, have enough depth to circumvent nostalgia? Yes. But do they constitute an essential addi-

tion to the E Street catalog? That's a harder question to answer.

The first place to look is "American Skin (41 Shots)" and "Land of Hope and Dreams," songs that debuted during the tour and are making their first recorded appearances on this album. Unfortunately, they're two of the weakest tracks.... The songs suffer from the same problem: they state their basic theme early on, then go on too long without developing in any dramatic way. Both clock in at around nine repetitious minutes.

Making a better case for the group's ongoing creativity are "Youngstown" and "If I Should Fall Behind." Springsteen recorded both songs in the '90s, without the help of the band, and reinvented them on the reunion tour.... Listen to either song on *Live in New York City* and you'll hear something vital that simply wasn't there the first time around. Nothing else is reinterpreted as drastically, but there is still something magical about hearing the E Street Band in action again....

So, to repeat the unanswered question, does this album represent an essential addition to the E Street catalog? The answer has to be no: there simply aren't enough new songs or new twists. But these are still brilliantly crafted, well-played, expertly recorded songs, exciting and moving in their own right. At this point in E Street history, that will have to do.

Jay Lustig
Newark Star-Ledger

...[T]he new album documents a rapturously received tour that celebrated the famed rocker's rededication to the E Street Band, as both the ideal vehicle for his music and as a symbol of his work's ongoing ideals of family and community, loyalty and friendship.

As good and as right as the band sounds here, it almost seems like some odd, vaguely ridiculous dream to think that Springsteen had some other band there for a while. Because, in a way, he didn't. ...With such... uplifting numbers as "Atlantic City" and "Mansion on the Hill," this song list demonstrates Springsteen's remarkable ability to delight, entertain, and astonish fans for three decades with songs about the miserable lives of people who can't afford tickets to his shows.

There are two new songs on the album, but you don't need to hear them to know what they're about, either. Sony helpfully notes in its press release that "Land of Hope and Dreams" features "themes of redemption of community," thus immediately distinguishing it from Springsteen's other songs. And "American Skin" has already proven that Springsteen is a greater provocateur than Eminem, since he didn't even have to release a CD in order to start a national controversy over his song content. I just wish that Springsteen's songs had Eminem's sense of humor. Or even Ralph Nader's.

Todd Kristel
Village Voice

If Bruce Springsteen's 1986 five-LP boxed set of live recordings brought down the curtain on the first act of his remarkable career, *Live in New York City* may well mark the opening of the third.... The reunion tour with the E Street Band was not just a simple celebration of glory days, a nostalgic tribute to past triumphs. It was a contemplation on old friends and the ties that bind. The opening salvo of "My Love Will Not Let You Down" and "Prove It All Night" set that stage, as Springsteen and company rummage through fresh corners of their songbook and reconnect in new and exciting ways. They draw enormous strength from one another, from being together as a band again, and that swagger spills out of the speakers on the new record....

Every song is an epic. All the pieces are fat, with long, rich instrumental passages, crescendos and crashing waves of big rock sound. This kind of extravagant bombast may sound great in a concert hall, but it can wear thin at home. Saxophonist Clarence Clemons seems to play the same solo over and over. But the vitality and joy that these nine musicians share is a palpable part of the production. Let's call it a bookmark and eagerly await the next chapter.

Joel Selvin
San Francisco Chronicle

GIMME SOME "AMERICAN SKIN"

With *Live in New York City,* nearly a year after the song made its concert debut, "American Skin (41 Shots)" takes its rightful place in Springsteen's official canon. Though Bruce chose to let the music do the talking on tour, the live album and concert film gave him occasion to make his intentions clear once and for all for those who still might not "get it."

Springsteen told Robert Hilburn of the *Los Angeles Times:* "It felt to me like the most necessary issue to deal with at the turn of the century was the question of race in America and how we deal with one another. To some degree, the answer to that question is going to decide a lot about how the nation as a whole eventually rises or falls. I wanted to point out that people of color are viewed through a veil of criminality and that ultimately means they are thought of as somehow less American than other Americans, therefore people with less rights. Not just by law enforcement but the guy behind the counter at the convenience store and whoever."

Springsteen also spoke about the context given the song in its official release, telling David Hinckley of the *New York Daily News:* "The placement of 'American Skin' took us quite a while. It's a ballad and there's already a long ballad section: 'The River,' 'Mansion on the Hill'—even 'Youngstown' is a kind of a hard-rock ballad. The film just got too slowed down, so we were looking for someplace else for 'American Skin.' As soon as we saw it at the end, it felt right. It's the latest thing the band has done. It's right in the present. You come out of 'Land of Hope and Dreams,' which is idealistic, then 'American Skin' brings you back down into the real world, where we do the real work."

The song's unreleased status didn't keep it from being picked by critics as a top single of 2000 (in both *Rolling Stone* and *Village Voice* polls), but the official release allows listeners—particularly in a post-Napster world—to judge for themselves. With the media and the rest of the world now better able to weigh in with an informed opinion, most *Live in NYC* reviews perceptively singled out "American Skin" as particularly praiseworthy.

"In the tradition of the great protest singers of generations past, Springsteen ventured into the belly of the beast to deliver this moving commentary on the shooting of an unarmed African immigrant, Amadou Diallo, by New York City police in 1999.... [T]he lyrics don't try to separate villains from victims so much as examine how such tragedies ultimately damage us all.... In Springsteen's vision of Amadou Diallo's America, nobody is safe. It's a chilling message and an overwhelming song, and its inclusion alone justifies the release of *Live in New York City.*

—Greg Kot / *Chicago Tribune*

"'American Skin (41 Shots)' remains a haunting and humane piece of music.... The song shows empathy for the cops, which is not the same as siding with them. But the soul of the song is the mother, aching with worry and concern. She is right to warn her son in this way, but what kind of world have we created where such advice is needed?... In every way, this is a heavy song."

—Kelly-Jane Cotter / *Asbury Park Press*

"A political firecracker and a socially conscious gem... as powerful and important as anything Springsteen has ever done."

—Alan K. Stout / *Wilkes-Barre Times-Leader*

"The composer of 'Born to Run' has grown to learn that sometimes you have to stop traveling on those highway/river analogies, and make a stand."

—Britt Robson / *Washington Post*

"...Springsteen steps to the mike and says, 'We need some quiet,' and he raises a hand to hush the crowd. The moment and the song say everything about Springsteen's continued relevance and his own belief in what his music has to say. 'American Skin' provides an emotional and thought-provoking end to a memorable event."

—Larry Katz / *Boston Herald*

"...plain-spoken and heartbreaking..."

—Roger Catlin / *Hartford Courant*

"'American Skin'...lives up to its subject through a compelling melody and skewering lyric.... he presents racism as a central tenet of American culture—a view that carries genuine weight coming from the country's great white rock poet."

—Jim Farber / *New York Daily News*

"...a haunting examination of fear and racism... Heard here, 'American Skin' reveals itself as one of Springsteen's most moving social-observation songs.... The song shows Springsteen is still able to write at the top of his game."

—Dan DeLuca / *Philadelphia Inquirer*

"So here's your chance—bypass the media, bypass the critics and listen for yourself. Police in New York City painted 'American Skin' as an anti-cop song. What you'll find is a dilemma where Springsteen takes the infamous shooting of an unarmed man and shows its effect on the everyday lives of people who live in fear of police. There's no blame, just pain."

—Mark Brown / *Rocky Mountain News*

GOT LIVE IF YOU WANT IT! HOME BRUCE OFFICE

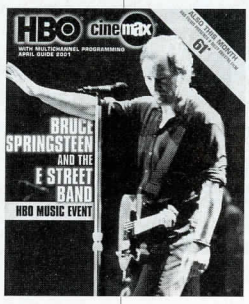
All the intensity, sincerity, and intelligence of Bruce Springsteen's reunion tour with the E Street Band has been preserved for future eyes and ears.... Even though the CD has more music than the HBO special, the program is a better primer for anyone who's never seen Springsteen in concert. Visuals, though minimalist, are important in a Springsteen show. The tour made great use of lighting, changing the mood from song to song. The cameras also captured the emotions of the musicians—their looks of intense concentration, their spontaneous grins.... Audience shots, for the most part, are missing from the program. It would've been nice to see some of the faces singing "Whoa-oh-oh" during "Badlands," for one thing.

One of the biggest advantages of the program is getting to see Springsteen enjoying his music. Bruce Springsteen is one of the best songwriters on the planet and one of the worst dancers in the universe. He's not just a clunky dancer, he's an enthusiastically horrible dancer. He kicks, he swings his elbows. And it's worth subscribing to HBO just to watch him go. As soon as Springsteen starts his bad dancing, the show reaches a new peak. The segment from "Murder Incorporated" to "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out" is astonishing. Even the goofy shtick that Springsteen uses to introduce the band seems fresh again.... It's a shame Springsteen did not include "The Promised Land" in either the HBO special or the CD. He performed that song immediately after "American Skin (41 Shots)," in poignant juxtaposition. Without "The Promised Land," the HBO special ends on a bleak note.

Kelly-Jane Cotter
Asbury Park Press

What seemed a short list on paper turns into glory on the screen... a great, swaggering rock show, one of the best committed to film for TV. Shot in extra-sharp high-definition TV, it will be well suited when it's eventually released on DVD—where, one assumes, with the extra material, they can truly go marathon length.

Roger Catlin
Hartford Courant



The straightforward production of the concert video can be maddeningly limiting, especially for anyone who attended any of the Boss' 10 shows at the Garden, or any of the 15 at the Continental Arena in 1999. There is little context; Springsteen could be performing anywhere....

Bob Ivry
Bergen Record

If you didn't catch Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band during their recent world tour, don't worry. This television special... is not only as good as seeing the '99-00 version of the Boss in the flesh. In many ways, it's better. In fact, this may be one of the most electrifying concert films ever produced. Hyperbole? Hunh-unh....

Certainly the Boss and the band deserve most of the credit here, doing what they have done best for three decades—barreling through tunes about the fun and flaws of life, playing off each other like a seasoned basketball team, inviting the entranced audience to join the party. But it is the handiwork of the film's director (Chris Hilson) and editor (Thom Zimny) that makes what could have been a predictable, toss-off TV show a masterpiece.

Like Martin Scorsese and 1978's *The Last Waltz,* chronicling the final performance of the Band, the men behind this HBO special clearly understand what makes Springsteen and crew connect so emotionally with fans.

Miriam Pace Longino
Atlanta Journal-Constitution

...Springsteen has steered his persona towards a safe landing. At age 50 when these shows were filmed, his stamina still wows, his spirit soars.... This new Springsteen—bemused by his own self-confidence, the crowd's ardor, and the telling glances between band members—is the man who recorded "Glory Days" almost twenty years ago. He still kicks out any hint of nostalgia with hard-earned good humor; in the middle of "Out in the Street" he kissed a fan as if he was kissing the whole world. As much as this footage makes you wish for a big-screen concert film from 1978, or 1980, or at least 1984, Springsteen's reluctance may have been a good thing: it only strengthened his bond with his concert audience. Is there another major rock star, or any star at all, who commands the world's attention with such a Spartan stage set?...

Tim Riley
KCRW

The result is a moving and ultimately satisfying stretch of pure music from one of America's most important songwriters and fiercely energetic performers. Director Chris Hilson and editor Thom Zimny capture the chemistry and emotion among Springsteen and his longtime [E Street Band] colleagues without making the event into a country-fair nostalgia show....

The cut to "American Skin" doesn't fit smoothly with what, until then, appears to be a complete concert. During the live shows, Springsteen followed "American Skin" with "The Promised Land," creating a juxtaposition between a song about racial strife and one that leaves viewers on a high note.

Minor quibbles aside, the HBO special gives viewers a unique chance to look in on a stirring rock show that will stand the test of time.

Richard Huff
New York Daily News

The heart of the Bruce Springsteen myth has always been an exhausting concert experience in which the Jersey rocker carries 20,000 or so close confidants through a three-hour arc by turns solemn and ecstatic, contemplative and cathartic.

Let it be said, then, that *Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band,* the concert that HBO will telecast... does the best job yet of capturing on screen why the Boss' ardent supporters have long advised naysayers: "You gotta see him live." And let it be added that—at two hours instead of three—the special is way too short....

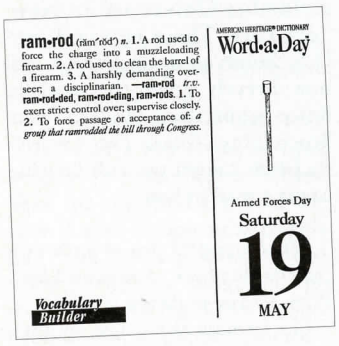
Both the CD set and TV concert chronicle a rare reunion tour with enough brio and ingenuity to avoid deathly nostalgia. The tour showed a group of seasoned musicians growing more canny with age.... The trouble with the HBO special and *Live From New York City* is that they fail to deliver what fans really want: a three-hour live show that hasn't been truncated for a two-hour time slot.... The best previous effort at catching Springsteen on screen was the three-song section of the 1980 *No Nukes* movie. By its length alone, and exemplary sound quality, *Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band* marks a vast improvement.... But the opportunity to see and hear a Springsteen show in its majestic entirety has been missed. Let's hope they rectify that on the inevitable DVD, which seems certain to arrive for Christmas.

Dan DeLuca
Philadelphia Inquirer

NO LIPS

PEPPERS AND EGGS:

Little Steven has been spending a lot of time in the garage. From overseeing A&R for Cavestomp! Records, to co-producing Underground Garage Saturdays (a monthly series showcasing garage bands at the Village Underground in New York), to a radio show in the works, Steve is finding his own way to both celebrate the '60s sounds on which he cut his teeth and encourage and promote new bands outside the system. And it's working. Van Zandt told David Hinckley, "Garage never went away. But today it's happening all over the country. I hesitate to say this, but I'm actually excited. We may be seeing something before the industry." Recent Underground shows have included ? and the Mysterians, as well as Rod Argent and Colin Blunstone of the Zombies. But as Van Zandt told Hinckley, "This isn't a nostalgia trip. The most interesting thing about this music is it still fits in so well, still sounds so modern. There's a basic primitive timelessness to it." For more info visit www.littlesteven.com. . . . Along those lines, a "lost" band Steve formed in the '90s, the Lost Boys, has had its recording debut a decade later, with "Affection" on the new Sopranos soundtrack, *Peppers and Eggs*. In June, Van Zandt guested with Scott Muni on NYC's Q104.3-FM and debuted two more unheard songs from the Lost Boys' still-unreleased album *Nobody Loves and Leaves Alive*. The album has been in the can for the better part of a decade—let's hope that changes soon. . . . Nils Lofgren also has a song on *Peppers and Eggs*, "Black Books." And next time you're out Vegas-way, check out the newly opened Nils Lofgren Guitar Bar—you never know, he might happen to drop in at the same time. Part of the Reserve Casino in Henderson, NV, it had quite a grand opening with a set from Nils himself on June 8. Lofgren's website (www.nilslofgren.com) has some great stuff available for fans, including the smokin' *Live & Raw* video, and a self-released "bootleg" that's not to be missed. We're hearing good things about Nils's new record, due this fall if we're lucky.


ram•rod (răm′rŏd′) n. 1. A rod used to force the charge into a muzzleloading firearm. 2. A rod used to clean the barrel of a firearm. 3. A harshly demanding overseer; a disciplinarian. —ram•rod tr.v. ram•rod•ded, ram•rod•ding, ram•rods. 1. To exert strict control over; supervise closely. 2. To force passage or acceptance of: a group that ramrodded the bill through Congress.
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Vocabulary Builder

ON AND OFF E STREET:

Danny Federici has good news too—he's just inked a deal with Universal/Hip-O Records, for an upcoming reissue of his *Flemington* CD along with some additional new material. One guy that should make particularly happy is *Backstreets* reader Sean Moffatt, keyboardist and self-appointed member of the Danny Federici Appreciation Society, who wrote in to bemoan the HBO special's minimal coverage of Danny and Roy. . . . Clarence Clemons is playing a handful of gigs this summer with his new band. Springsteen classics "Paradise by the C," "Pink Cadillac," and "If I Should Fall Behind" have turned up in his set, in addition to a lot of songs from "the best kept secret in rock 'n' roll: my first album!" Rumor has it that the Big Man may be recording shows at the Pony over Labor Day weekend—visit clarenceclemons.com for confirmation and/or other dates. . . . Ex-E Streeter David Sancious is touring with Eric Clapton. . . . Carol Dennis—a member of Springsteen's '92-93 band, that we knew. But ex-wife of Bob Dylan and mother of his child? That revelation came courtesy of Howard Sounes' recent book, *Down the Highway: The Life of Bob Dylan*. Dennis went on the record to clear up some distortions—acknowledging she and Dylan were secretly married for six years and have a daughter together, but clarifying, "Bob and I made a choice to keep our marriage a private matter for a simple reason—to give our daughter a normal childhood... To portray Bob as 'hiding his daughter' is just malicious and ridiculous. That is something he would never do. Bob has been a wonderful, active father...." That's right, he ain't no long-gone daddy.

SUSAN KENNEDY PHOTO

CHARTED TERRITORY:

Live in New York City has gone Platinum, debuting at #5 on the *Billboard* chart. That's as high as it went, sliding decisively downward and dropping into the triple digits within six weeks. Of course, an apropos response might be "who cares?"—especially in a period where Staind, Destiny's Child, and Tool have been claiming the top slot. As for the HBO special, Inside.com framed the Nielsen ratings nicely: "Saturday's XFL [Extreme Football League] did less than half the Nielsens of HBO's concert special *Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band*, though football was available in about three times as many homes.". . . . Springsteen was nominated for "Best Cameo in a Movie" at the 2001 MTV Movie Awards for his turn in *High Fidelity*; James Van Der Beek snatched the prize at the June 7 awards for *Scary Movie*. . . VH-1 listmania continues, with the cable network recently airing its 100 Greatest Videos. "Dancing in the Dark" made the cut, at #75; "We Are the World" had Springsteen's other appearance in the countdown, at #93. Michael Jackson's "Thriller" topped the list. . . . Bruce featured more prominently in episode #126 of *Behind the Music*, which focused on the year 1975 and felt at times like a Springsteen special. Bruce also showed up to a lesser degree in the *Behind the Music*'s 1987 program, talking about *Tunnel of Love*. Not enough drug problems for his own *Behind the Music*, it would seem, so we'll take what we can get.

IT TAKES TWO: Congratulations to Guy Aceto (SuperSub) and Joanne Orchant (subscriber), pictured above and married in May, with guests treated to the sounds of Springsteen, Nils, Southside, and Joe Grushecky. "A couple of loyal subscribers who found each other ... finally," Guy and Joanne told us. "After rubbing elbows as strangers at more than a couple shows, we'll be going together from now on." They've combined their two subscriptions into one—ah, can there be a more perfect symbol of a loving union? . . . . In her *Living* article on throwing a Fourth of July cookout, New Jersey-raised Martha Stewart placed *Born in the U.S.A.* at the top of her list of favorite CDs to play. We've also found that *Plugged: In Concert* CDs make some nice napkin rings. . . . *People* magazine's April 23, 2001 quote of the week came from Bruce, asked about his kids' musical tastes: "Let's just say I know the Britney Spears record inside out."

IN REVIEW

Need something to keep you cool?

Summer Reading List

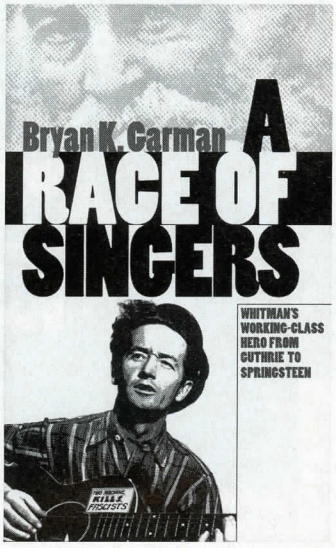
By Andrew E. Massimino

Summer's here and the time is right for reading at the beach. There's nothing quite like it. Hat pulled down, sunglasses hiding your margarita eyes, the ocean breeze cooling the sun's rays, and a book to fill your head. The only question is, what do you want to fill it with? Thanks to four diverse authors and their equally diverse styles, Backstreets readers have quite a few options to help ease the gaps between Springsteen tour dates, CD releases, and club appearances. From the coffee table to the coffee shop, these four books will help tide you over, even if you can't make it down to the shore this year. So do yourself a favor—grab a few cold ones and head out to the sandbox right next to the kiddie pool. Or relax on the couch as that relentless sun takes a dive for the night. Hey, there ain't nothing on TV but reruns. Don't kill the day watching golf, you know who's going to win! Grab a book and feed your head. There are 13 official summer weekends this year. If you pace yourself just right, you could read all four of these babies by Labor Day, saving the last few weeks for some non-Bruce material like *War and Peace* (original title, *War, What is it Good For?*). Tonight, tonight the script's just right, I'm gonna give myself a little treat. The summer's here and the time is right for reading in the heat. All apologies.

•A Race of Singers: Whitman's Working-Class Hero from Guthrie to Springsteen

By Bryan K. Garman / University of North Carolina Press, 338 pages

Bryan Garman is a big fan. He also happens to have a Ph.D. from Emory University and is chair of the history department at the Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C. (where Chelsea Clinton learned geometry). His first book, *A Race of Singers*, takes an academic



approach to following the lineage of Guthrie to Dylan to Springsteen. But he postulates that to find the roots for all of them one must delve back into the mid-19th century. From the book's back cover: "When Walt Whitman published *Leaves of Grass* in 1855, he dreamed of inspiring a 'race of singers' who would celebrate the working class and realize the promise of American democracy. By examining how singers such as Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and Bruce Springsteen both embraced and reconfigured Whitman's vision, Garman shows that Whitman succeeded. In doing so, Garman celebrates the triumphs yet also exposes the limitations of Whitman's legacy."

Backstreets caught up with Garman over beers at a watering hole near some Maryland pines.

Do you remember the first Springsteen record that caught your attention?

BG: I gotta say it was *Born in the U.S.A.* At the time I was totally immersed in Dylan, but I remember the videos for "Dancing in the Dark" and "Glory Days" striking me visually. I think my cousin went out and bought the album, and soon after I was at a Murphy's or an Ames and found *The Wild, the Innocent...* in the cut-out bin for three dollars. These songs were very Dylan-esque in structure, and I think that within a month I had all the records. I was probably 15 or 16 then, and when I listened to *The River* I was hooked. The range of emotions on that record is amazing. "The Price You Pay" is still one of my favorites.

What about your first live experience?

BG: I skipped football practice to go to the Veterans Stadium concert in Philly in 1985. What really amazed me was, here was this huge spectacle of a show, and early on Bruce did a mini-acoustic set with some *Nebraska* numbers. It really showed me that he could connect with people in many different ways

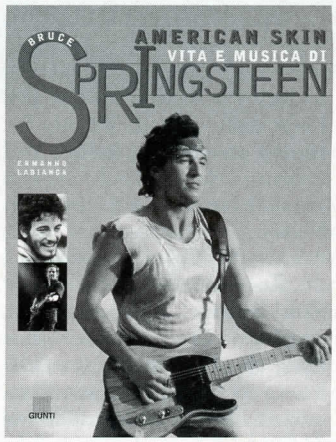
Is this book the first time you've written about Springsteen?

BG: I started writing papers in college that had a lot to do with Dylan and Springsteen. My college thesis was on Sam Shepard, the playwright who followed Dylan's "Rolling Thunder Revue," and I incorporated a lot of his themes of masculinity and class with those of Dylan and Springsteen.

I really like the Whitman quote—"Be radical. Be not too damned radical!"- and how you propose that it applies to Springsteen, Dylan, and Guthrie.

BG: Throughout his career Springsteen has been painting pictures, and he almost never tells you how you should feel about them. He says, "Let's look at this." It's both admirable and frustrating at times.

Garman's book is one of the best studies available of Springsteen's place in our social consciousness. By following the line of the working-class hero back to Whitman, Garman sheds new light on that context. "I think politics are implicit. I'm not interested in writing rhetoric or ideology," explained Springsteen in 1998. "I think it was Walt Whitman who said, 'The poet's job is to know the soul.' You strive for that, assist your audience in finding theirs." And from Whitman, "The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it." As Garman writes, "Springsteen [is] proof positive."



•American Skin: Vita e Musica di Bruce Springsteen

By Ermanno Labianca / Giunti Gruppo Editoriale-Firenze, 264 pages

While primarily in Italian, *American Skin* has enough information (both written and visual) to appeal to any Springsteen fan. Astute Backstreets readers might remember Mr. Labianca from his article covering two tour stops in Italy on the *Joad* tour ("Once Upon a Time in Italy," *Backstreets* #56). Some may have enjoyed his previous book, *Local Hero*, which followed the 1992-93 World Tour and its bandmembers. Born in Rome in 1961, Labianca first traveled to the U.S. when he was 21 to study at Columbia University in New York City. There he saw Gary U.S. Bonds perform, which led him directly down the road to Bruce Springsteen (and his own Bruce 'zine, *Follow That Dream*). *Backstreets* caught up with Labianca via e-mail in June.

What prompted you to write and compile this book, American Skin? When did you get the idea to do it?

EL: *American Skin* is just another

step in my dedication to Springsteen's art. I had quit publishing *Follow That Dream* in 1995 (after nearly 10 years), just before *Tom Joad* came out. In 1999, with the E Street Band back on board, I needed to fill that gap with a book that, for me, would be the sum of nearly 25 years of travels, concerts, phone calls... a lot of friends and good memories left behind. My interest and devotion started long before the fax era, you know, way before e-mail and the internet. It was a lot of work. Too much paper, too many files and magazines to carry around. I felt I should do a comprehensive book, sort of an ultimate step. I did it for myself, too. You tend to forget things and a reference book really helps you.

How many Springsteen shows do you think you've seen?

EL: More than a hundred, I don't have the exact figure. April 1981, in Zurich, Switzerland on *The River* European Tour, that was my first one. The Christic Institute benefits in 1990 were probably my favorites.

American Skin *is a beautiful book—great photos and graphics. I loved all the old concert promo posters in there. How did you find all this stuff?*

EL: I tried to put all of myself into this book. Besides writing the articles and doing the research, which was a lot of work, I also wanted to have control of the style and appearance. I did basically what I used to do for *Follow That Dream*—trying to have a significant role in choosing the photos, and giving suggestions and directions to whomever was elected to shape the graphic. As for the posters and picture sleeves, they are what I like the most. No doubt one of my favorite ones is the Vietnam Veterans' Benefit poster, which I bought while visiting *Backstreets* some time ago.

I'm interested why you chose the title American Skin, *perhaps Springsteen's most controversial song.*

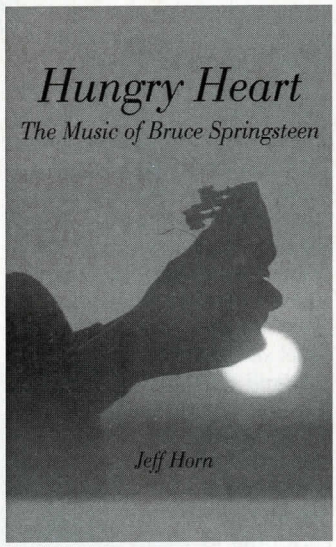
EL: Obviously, "American Skin" was a big issue in June 2000, even before I flew to New York for the final stand of the tour. Local Italian newspapers had already reported about Atlanta, the new song, and the reaction by the New York police. I found that extremely interesting. Hearing the song was thrilling, it has a tremendous power. It's like Peter Gabriel's "Biko," like Dylan's "Hurricane." It summarizes *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, and it's also a flashback to "Lost in the Flood." It's gospel, it's blues, it's rock 'n' roll. It has it all in there, and that's Bruce to me. What he represents to me is a concentrate of 50 years of American popular music. Think about *Live in New York City*. You got rock 'n' roll, you got folk, country, and soul. It's like sticking the Stone Pony into the Grand Ole Opry.

Your book brings us up to date with setlist information and discography. Can you think of other reasons why someone who doesn't speak Italian would enjoy it?

EL: The setlist information is there to serve the non-Italian speaking readers. In compiling it I avoided doubling the information that already exists in other books like *Backstreets: The Man and His Music* as much as I could. I tried to put together a body of work that could provide setlists that are non-existing in other publications. I could have used more, of course, but that was not my goal. I wanted to balance information and reflection. I wish people over there could read and understand the research I did on the extremely vast catalog of unreleased studio tracks. I did my best to trace them all down and comment on them. And I hope they enjoy all the photos and graphics.

One of those photos featured that "rich man in a poor man's shirt" from the Born in the U.S.A. *tour, and was selected for the cover. What is it about that photo or era that enticed you to put it on the cover?*

EL: Are you surprised by me using an old photo for a book printed in 2000? I am too! At first I wanted to use a shot from the 1999-2000 tour or one from the acoustic shows. When the publisher suggested having a portrait where Bruce was recognizable to many, I understood that it was the right choice. I didn't want to talk only to those who are still here watching Bruce's every step. I also wanted to deal with many of my generation who were there when Bruce was changing their lives. Many of them wrote to me to say that the book served to shake their memories and to find themselves once again. That's Bruce's power, not mine. I was only the one who found the keys to their stolen cars.



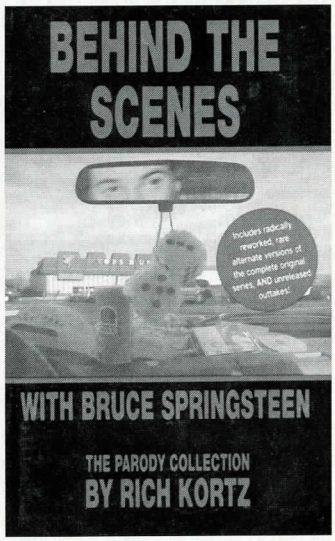
•Hungry Heart: The Music of Bruce Springsteen
By Jeff Horn / 1st Books, 303 pages

The first thing that stands out when you pick up a copy of Jeff Horn's *Hungry Heart* (besides the cheesy/70s/self-help/spiritual feel to the cover photo—I mean, this thing makes you wanna sing "Kumbaya") is that the book is self-published with the help of 1st Books. You can look at this one of two ways. I'm sure the way Mr. Horn would like us to look at it is that this is truly the work of a F-A-N. And he'd have a point, to be sure. Marked with almost as much personal opinion as fact, *Hungry Heart* uses Horn's informal style to give the impression that he's just one of us tramps. Interestingly, one of the stated goals of the book is to show that Springsteen's unique relationship with his fans is due in large measure to the "mutual feeling that the other is 'one of us.'"

You won't find too much new here—*Hungry Heart* ends with the release of *Tracks*. But you will find some heartfelt sentiment from a fan who put it in writing:

"Springsteen has revealed that he had forgotten all about 'Iceman' until reminded about it by some fans. As a side note, my seven-year-old daughter had been sitting next to me while this disc was playing and really digging the songs- until 'Iceman,' when she beat a hasty retreat."

It's these personal asides, mixed with pretty solid information, that comprises the uniqueness of this book.



•Behind the Scenes With Bruce Springsteen
By Rich Kortz / Push/Pull/Press, 251 pages

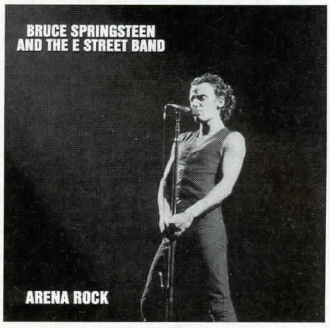
I have to be honest and admit that I did not expect to like Rich Kortz's Springsteen parody, *Behind the Scenes*. You're always standing on shaky ground when you try to put words into real people's mouths, especially when those people are respected the way Springsteen and Co. are around here. So I picked it up and opened to some random page. Halfway down I realized that I had forgotten it was a parody, which in some ways is frightening. These conversations never happened—at least we hope they didn't! But Kortz knows his subjects so well that you can hear their voices, accents and all. And you can imagine these words coming out of their mouths—that is until the hyperbole hits, and you begin chuckling as you read. Often, those chuckles turn to an almost guilty laughter as you realize that Kortz's irreverence is based in appreciation and admiration of his subjects. He covers a lot of ground—from childhood conversations between Bruce and his mother to post-2000 tour phone calls amongst the band—focusing on some of the more infamous scenes from Springsteen lore. And he does it with a wit and a knowledge that makes you wish *someone* had a tape recorder rolling back on that tour bus in '78.

ON COLLECTING

By Fred Mills

For the benefit of our readers, *Backstreets* magazine provides ratings of unauthorized releases currently in circulation. Don't write us asking where these can be obtained. *Backstreets* in no manner, shape, or form endorses these recordings. These reviews are provided by our columnists solely for informational purposes. Despite these words of warning, some collectors will still seek this material out, and for those collectors, our reviews should help you steer clear of the real losers.

Unauthorized CDs are growing in numbers and with that growth, expect some real ripoffs—our advice is let the buyer beware, and demand to listen to material before you buy it. Each title here has been rated for packaging, performance, and sound quality on a scale from one to ten, one being awful, and ten being quality generally found on legitimate releases.



•Arena Rock
(Palace, 2CD-R)
Sound: 7
Performance: 9
Packaging: 7

Grassroots label Palace's latest effort is a previously unbooted soundboard, long coveted by tapers, of the October 25, 1976, Philly Spectrum show, from the *Born to Run* tour leg that featured the Miami Horns joining the E Streeters. Auspicious both for its source status and the fact that the show was Bruce's first headlining arena date, it features some real goodies, setlist-wise: a super-extended harmonica-and-vocal intro for "She's the One," a buoyant reading of "Rendezvous," a swaggering "Raise Your Hand" (owing to the board sound, you can really enjoy the call-and-response vocals), a piano-and-glockenspiel arrangement for "The Promise," and a fantastic, full-on rarity, "A Fine Fine Girl" (covered here for the first time and soon to be replaced in the set by "Quarter to Three").

Performed at the show but omitted from this release without an explanation (disc-time limitations would not be a valid one; source tape glitches perhaps?): "Growin' Up," which came between "Backstreets" and "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out." Nice pics of Bruce and Clarence, possibly from the show itself, adorn the panel and booklet.

Sound quality is good for its era—Palace rates the soundboard a "B"—with only a modest amount of line noise and/or tape hiss, nothing that will seriously detract from the listening experience. And it's clearly collectible, given the fact that the tour with the Miami Horns has been relatively under-documented compared to the earlier *BTR* tour legs. There has been some coverage of late, in particular Doberman's nice 3CD-R *Higher and Higher* set from the 3/24-25/77 Boston Music Hall shows. Previously, too, there were E St.'s *Soul Crusaders* (2/13/77) and Midnight Beat's *Jacksonville (& My Father's Place)* (3/4/77), both from excellent-sounding audience tapes. Still, not much has turned up from the late '76 string of shows; both Great Dane's *We Gotta Get Out of This Place* (11/4/76) and Flashback's *Streets of Life* (August 1976) were soundboards, yes, but riddled with flaws. So it's pretty hard not to recommend this unless the omission of "Growin' Up" bothers you.

•Christmas Holiday Night
(Crystal Cat, 2CD)
Sound: 8
Performance: 9
Packaging: 9

Rather than regurgitate show and setlist commentary on the 12/18/00, holiday bash at Asbury Park's Convention Hall, allow your humble scribe to direct you to pages 13-17 of *Backstreets* #70. I'll give you a few minutes to read over our coverage of the two concerts that Bruce—jointly billed with "The Max Weinberg 7 With Friends"—mounted to benefit a brace of regional charities. Got all that?

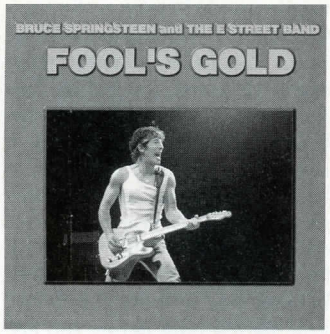
Crystal Cat's version of the 12/18 show is a much cleaner, brighter-sounding recording than the one which began circulating among tape and CD-R traders within days of the concert. While occasional boominess and crowd noise give it less-than-perfect sound, it's eminently listenable from start to finish.

CC's usual superb packaging is in full effect here, crammed with color photos, an essay about the benefits, repro of the handwritten setlist, and a transcription of the lyrics to "My City of Ruins." The only complaint that might be leveled is that unlike the artwork accompanying the treed-and-traded CD-R version, there are no individual personnel credits with the tracklistings; it would have been nice if CC had included similarly detailed comments. They would be particularly useful for the casual consumer who might not realize, for example, that it's the MW7's Jimmy Vivino lending his vocals to "Run Run Rudolph," or that it's Bruce, Patti and Soozie Tyrell all chiming in on "(Christmas) Baby, Please Come Home," or that any number of other musicians, family and friends are onstage at various points in the show.

Incidentally, CC selected 12/18 over 12/17 for an obvious reason: the second night found a stunned crowd treated to a three-song country-rockin' soundcheck: "Jambalaya," "Hey, Good Lookin'" and "Mystery Train." (The sound quality on these three cuts is slightly better than the main set.) Somewhere that night, Hank and Elvis and all the other great departed Americana icons were looking down on Asbury Park—and smiling.

•Fool's Gold
(Doberman, 3CD-R)
Sound: 7
Performance: 10
Packaging: 6

The dogs at Doberman have been laying low of late, and while this slightly-above-average audience recording of the January 24, 1985 show at the Providence, RI, Civic Arena doesn't mark the most auspicious return, it *is* a welcome addition to the collection. That's due chiefly to the fact that the third leg of the American *Born in the U.S.A.* tour (it ran throughout January '85; next would come the conquering



of overseas stadiums) has to-date registered barely a blip on bootleggers' radar screens. Only E St.'s *Perfect in '85* (1/15/85, Charlotte) comes immediately to mind, a decent—but despite the title, not perfect—board recording. (Trivia note: yours truly was at the Charlotte concert, watching the taper patch into the soundboard even as I nervously fingered my own Walkman D6 and microphones.)

So, whattaya get? Well, the official *Backstreets* book rated this "probably the best show of the third leg," and one must concur with that assessment. The 30-song set featured the second-ever version of "Working on the Highway," one of the jauntiest readings of "Reason to Believe" (Bruce wailing on his harp), a stunning version of "Trapped," "No Surrender" done as an acoustic ballad, and encore material that was, at the time, unusual ("I'm a Rocker," "Ramrod," "Wooly Bully," an after-the-fact "Santa Claus," and "Thunder Road," usually placed far earlier in the show).

Doberman generously filled out the remainder of disc three with six bonus tracks taken from other shows of the third leg. Sound quality is generally below that of the main body, but listenable. "Shut Out the Light" and "Used Cars" nicely supplement the other *Nebraska* songs performed in Providence; consumers will want to note that the two songs are banded together as track 11 instead of separate tracks as listed on the rear tray panel. Oh, and a quick word on the artwork: it's the worst that Doberman has ever attempted, its "gold" theme closer in tone to a sickly yellow-green, with a generic Bruce-in-headband motif additionally detracting from the visuals. A couple of color photos and good liner notes in the booklet help ease the pain.

Studio "41 Shots" shelved

NYC Serenades

John Lennon's was released on February 10, 1986. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan put his out in 1997, and Black 47's hit in 1999. On April 3 of this year, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band added their own Live in New York City to the racks.

In addition to the CD format, Springsteen's new live set was also released on cassette, minidisc, vinyl (a three-LP set), and Super Audio CD. SACD, a recent audiophile format developed by Sony, does require a special player, though SACD players are backwards compatible with standard compact discs. More information on SACD is available at www.sony.com.

Though the packaging makes no mention of the *Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band* HBO special, *Live in New York* was without question conceived as a soundtrack to the concert film. So when "Born to Run" became a late addition to the HBO version, it had to be added to the album as well. Springsteen told *USA Today*'s Edna Gunderson that he felt "something was missing" when he screened a near-final cut of the HBO special. "It was that summational song. 'Born to Run' somehow includes everything I did and everything I'm still thinking about. It's a spiritual connector through all the material I've written."

Added to *Live in NYC* at the eleventh hour, "Born to Run" was squeezed in at the end of disc one—out of sequence, and not listed on the initial packaging, but it's there. A source at Columbia explained the situation to *ICE* Magazine in their May issue: "Essentially what happened is, they made the change way too late, so the song isn't on the artwork at all. We couldn't even do a sticker in time... it was literally that, that, that late. So the song is definitely on every album available at retail. But it's creating some confusion because some people are looking for it, turning the CD over and seeing it's not on there.... We've already amended the artwork, so it'll be on there for the second manufacturing run." Just a couple of weeks can make the difference—"Born to Run" was added to the packaging in time for the April 18 Japanese release.

Top: The Canadian one-track promo, front and back; bottom: the Euro 4-track sleeve and disc.

Another peculiarity is the one-minute gap separating "American Skin (41 Shots)" from the six additional album tracks. While some have interpreted the pause as a "minute of silence" following the lament of "American Skin," *ICE* was told by the Columbia exec that "the HBO concert was really viewed as an entity unto itself. So the additional songs we put on... were considered additional tracks, if you will, that were perfect for the CD release, but weren't part of the HBO show. So I believe the pause was to separate one body of work from the other."

"American Skin" was selected as the single—or at least the closest thing to a single. Springsteen and the E Streeters entered the studio in early March, with the primary intent of recording a studio take of "American Skin" for radio. When "American Skin" made it to radio, however, it was as a live edit. Running just over five minutes, the slimmed-down version of the live track begins shortly before the first verse and fades out over Clarence's solo, with some tightening in between (a similar video edit for the song was aired on VH-1 and at bruce-springsteen.net).

The live edit appeared on unadorned promotional CD-Rs from Sony—either alone, or coupled with the full live version—as well as on a few more polished promo releases in other countries. A Canadian one-track promo presents the 5:06 edit in an exclusive picture sleeve. A disc pressed in Austria was a four-track sampler with a different picture sleeve, adding the live versions of "Land of Hope and Dreams," "Born to Run," and "The River," to a 5:09 "American Skin" edit. There has yet to be a commercial single released, though it's not out of the question—catalog numbers (671 222-1 and 671 222-2) were assigned for European singles, and some schedules still list them as upcoming. The studio cut remains on the shelf.

Also remaining unreleased is a remix of the studio cut. Much like Arthur Baker had a go at a few of the *Born in the U.S.A.* singles in the '80s, Cory Rooney was tapped for an "American Skin" remix this spring. A hot producer and award-winning songwriter, Rooney's profile has been high thanks to his recent work with Mariah Carey, Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony. Though he reportedly completed the remix, the current indication is that fans won't be hearing Rooney's "American Skin" handiwork anytime soon.

—Christopher Phillips

the backstreets jukebox

1. Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band
Live in New York City
Columbia (3LP)

2. Radiohead
Amnesiac
EMI/Parlaphone (CD)

3. Alejandro Escovedo
Man Under the Influence
Bloodshot (CD)

4. Rocket From the Crypt
Group Sounds
Vagrant (CD)

5. Whiskeytown
Pneumonia
Lost Highway (CD)

6. R.E.M.
Reveal
Warner Bros. (CD)

7. Bob Schneider
Lonelyland
UMG/Universal (CD)

8. Buddy Guy
Sweet Tea
Silvertone (CD)

9. Chris Whitley
Rocket House
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Signature _____

#71 / SUMMER 2001

Continued from page 9

left, and grinned broadly as he watched the two old friends belt out the rabble-rouser, their faces inches apart.

After departing the stage briefly, all returned for "Trapped Again," which was preceded by a snatch of James Brown funk. Southside then paused for a moment, and spoke admiringly of Parker's courage in covering an Aretha Franklin tune, whereupon the band broke into "Chain of Fools," Graham soulfully taking the lead after Southside and Bruce belted "chain-chain-chain." Bruce took over and finished the song (a great pleasure for those of us who believe him to be a soul man at heart), and then played the opening riff of "Born on the Bayou." Jukes lead guitarist Bobby Bandiera often performs Creedence material in his solo shows, and he happily jumped in to take the second verse. Bruce followed this with an intense guitar solo, after which Bandiera dropped to his knees and bowed in mock supplication. Laughing, Bruce segued back into "Chain of Fools."

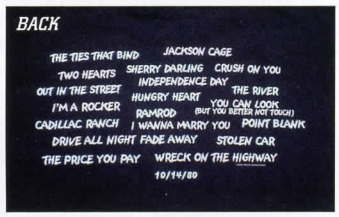
At that number's conclusion, Southside bid adieu to the crowd and playfully began to head offstage as though he were done for the night. (They had deliberately skipped "Havin' a Party," the Jukes' signature tune.) Then, on cue, Bruce stopped him and reminded him that he "[had] to do this one." Johnny shrugged in mock embarrassment and turned expectantly to the band. Bobby promptly started up an a cappella doo-wop number, which elicited a bemused grin from Bruce, who raised his eyebrow in a characteristic expression of "confusion," and then glanced around the stage in glee as he shared the joke with the rest of the Jukes. As Johnny and Bobby finished, Bruce asked, "What the hell was that?" This was too much for Southside, who mocked him with a sardonic "He's too young to remember that one" before launching into a rousing rendition of the Sam Cooke song.

What a night! A stellar set by Parker (Joe D'Urso & Stone Caravan opened), a brief but solid Southside performance, and then Bruce joining these two for a 50-minute set—not as a front man, but as just another Jersey Shore musician on a night out. Bruce's guitar work was, as usual, dynamic and forceful, and he delighted fans several times by taking blistering solos. He was obviously enjoying himself immensely, laughing and joking with his cohorts, and relishing his duties as band mate. The E Street Band and its future were certainly not on Bruce's mind this evening; he seemingly had shed twenty years, and for those of us lucky enough to be there, it was a joy to be young again for one night.

CONCERT T-SHIRT SALE!

All are officially licensed, 100% pure Springsteen shirts, and all are on special: get any two shirts for $35, and any four for $60. That's like getting a **free** shirt when you buy three! Quantities are limited. All shirts are pre-shrunk 100% cotton.

DARKNESS T-SHIRT
Black, with the *Darkness* album cover in color on the front, and song titles printed on the back in tan and gray. As sold on the 1999-2000 Tour. L or XL. **$20**



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Black, with the *River* album cover on the front, and song titles printed on the back in blue and gray. As sold on the 1999-2000 Tour. L or XL. **$20**

TRACKS T-SHIRT
White, front only, with the four cover images from the *Tracks* CDs in color. "Bruce Springsteen" and "1999" in black. As sold on the 1999-2000 Tour. L or XL. **$20**

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Black, with a beautiful color image of Asbury Park's Convention Hall on the front, 1999 Meadowlands dates on the back! As sold on the 1999-2000 Tour. L or XL. **$20**

ALSO AVAILABLE:

BORN TO RUN T-SHIRT White, with the album cover on the front, and a smaller photo from the *BTR* shoot on the back. As sold on the '99-2000 Tour. L or XL. **$20**

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White, with the album cover in color on the front, and song titles printed on the back in red and blue. As sold on the 1999-2000 Tour. L or XL. **$20**

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Deliver Me From Nowhere

Lost in the Mud

By Chris Nelson

When the first bits of piano marched out against a blanket of metallic organ, few knew what to make of them. It was July 1, 2000—the final gig of Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band's reunion tour, a special night where Springsteen might pull anything out of his hat. The most astute of E Street geeks may have pegged the passage as the discarded studio outro to "Jungleland." Soon the full band was raining down on the keyboards like a hail of shrapnel. But it was only when Springsteen opened up the song's vocals that his intentions became fully clear.

"The ragamuffin gunner's returning home, like a hungry runaway..."

After keeping the song on the shelf for nearly 22 years, Springsteen was pulling down "Lost in the Flood," his homage to small lives blown into nothing from his 1973 debut, *Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J.* Listening to the concert version, captured on *Live in New York City*, you can hear an engaged storyteller backed by a explosive band. This was a single-shot tune on the last night of the tour, and yet it bounded from the stage with more vigor than any of the older songs the band had drilled over the preceding year. The performance was an unqualified success.

But of course it prompts questions. Why "Lost in the Flood?" Why now? Since the reunion tour was so well grounded in themes of rejuvenation and community, it makes sense to look at where this song fits into those themes. What other songs is it tied to?

The most immediate answer is "Born in the U.S.A.," which followed "Lost in the Flood" that night and on *Live in New York City*. Like the singer in "Born in the U.S.A.," the ragamuffin gunner is a veteran scarred by his experience in Vietnam. In fact, the first verse of "Lost in the Flood" is Springsteen's earliest precursor to the character-driven political work he began in earnest in the 1980s.

But a more compelling thought is that the song was recruited for its relation to the tour's controversial highlight: "American Skin (41 Shots)." In fact, "Lost in the Flood" and "American Skin (41 Shots)" have several elements in common.

Springsteen debuted "American Skin" almost a month earlier in Atlanta, and caused an immediate stir with its recounting of the 1999 New York police killing of unarmed African immigrant Amadou Diallo. "American Skin" opens on the scene of his death, with an officer kneeling over his lifeless body in a doorway. The 41 shots of the title come from the number of bullets four cops fired at Diallo (19 hit their mark) after mistaking his wallet for a weapon. If anyone was ever lost in a flood, it was Diallo, falling against that wave of deadly rounds.

Because the bulk of attention to "Lost in the Flood" has been focused on the vet who opens the song, it's easy to overlook the scene that closes it. The lyric is comprised of three vignettes. Verse one centers on the gunner, deadened and lost upon returning from the war; verse two revolves around Jimmy the Saint, a hotrodder who dies driving foolhardily into a hurricane (presaging "The Promised Land"'s more affirmative declaration, " I'm heading straight into the storm"). The third verse involves a street gang shoot-out. It's familiar for its "West Side Story" setting, though it's more brutal than the romantic tales on *The Wild, the Innocent & the E Street Shuffle.*

That verse climaxes with a police officer shooting an immigrant, though unlike Diallo or the person in "American Skin," this immigrant fires off his own shots as well. "Some kid comes blastin' 'round the corner, but a cop puts him right away," Springsteen sings. "He lays on the street holding his leg, screaming something in Spanish / Still breathing when I walked away."

Musically, "American Skin"—which turns up on *Live in New York City* as the final track before the "bonus" cuts open with "Lost in the Flood"—is more understated than the dramatic "Lost in the Flood." It's interesting to note that "American Skin" begins, like much of Springsteen's 1990s work, with broad synthesizer washes. But by the time the second chorus comes around, the synth is gone (or at least inaudible) and keyboard duties are taken over by the sound so familiar from Springsteen's 1970s work: Danny Federici's metallic organ stacked behind Roy Bittan's nimble, detailed piano.

More intriguing still is that "Lost in the Flood" and "American Skin (41 Shots)" share a lyric. In the older song, at the end of the first verse, Gunner's described with "his ankles caked in mud." In the final verse of "American Skin," a nearly identical phrase appears: "41 shots ... got my books caked in this mud/ We're baptized in these waters and in each other's blood." (Caked mud also turns up "Stand On It"—"He had mud caked on his goggles"—but that's a similarity of coincidence rather than consequence.)

To some ears, the mud lyric in "American Skin" springs from left field, particularly after the city setting of the first two verses. But it's not a literal picture; Springsteen is describing how Americans are mired in a collective racial consciousness that results in, for instance, whites often presuming blacks are criminals. "The first verse is about people trying to cross the river of race, and how the river is tainted with blood," Springsteen told *Los Angeles Times* writer Robert Hilburn.

In the 1990s, mud has overrun the river as Springsteen's symbol of choice. It turns up three times on *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (1995), sometimes as signifier, sometimes as scene-setter ("Balboa Park" 's line, "Little Spider, his sneakers covered in river mud" is both). "The Big Muddy" best exemplifies Springsteen's use of the trope: mud is a visual stand-in for sin, or more often, life's difficult, gray circumstances and choices. In both "Lost in the Flood" and "American Skin (41 Shots)," mud plays a similar role. In the former, the mud (which we're told turns out to be quicksand) is the Vietnam war and the mental and spiritual toll it took; in the latter it's the United States' racist history, and the problems we're still experiencing almost a century-and-a-half after the Civil War.

Back on the last night of the reunion tour, most folks were clamoring for the sentimental favorites. What they got was something not just a little more obscure, but a little more poignant. By calling "Lost in the Flood" up for duty at a time when "American Skin (41 Shots)" was front and center in the spotlight, Springsteen tied together the two ends of his career in ways that few fans could have anticipated.

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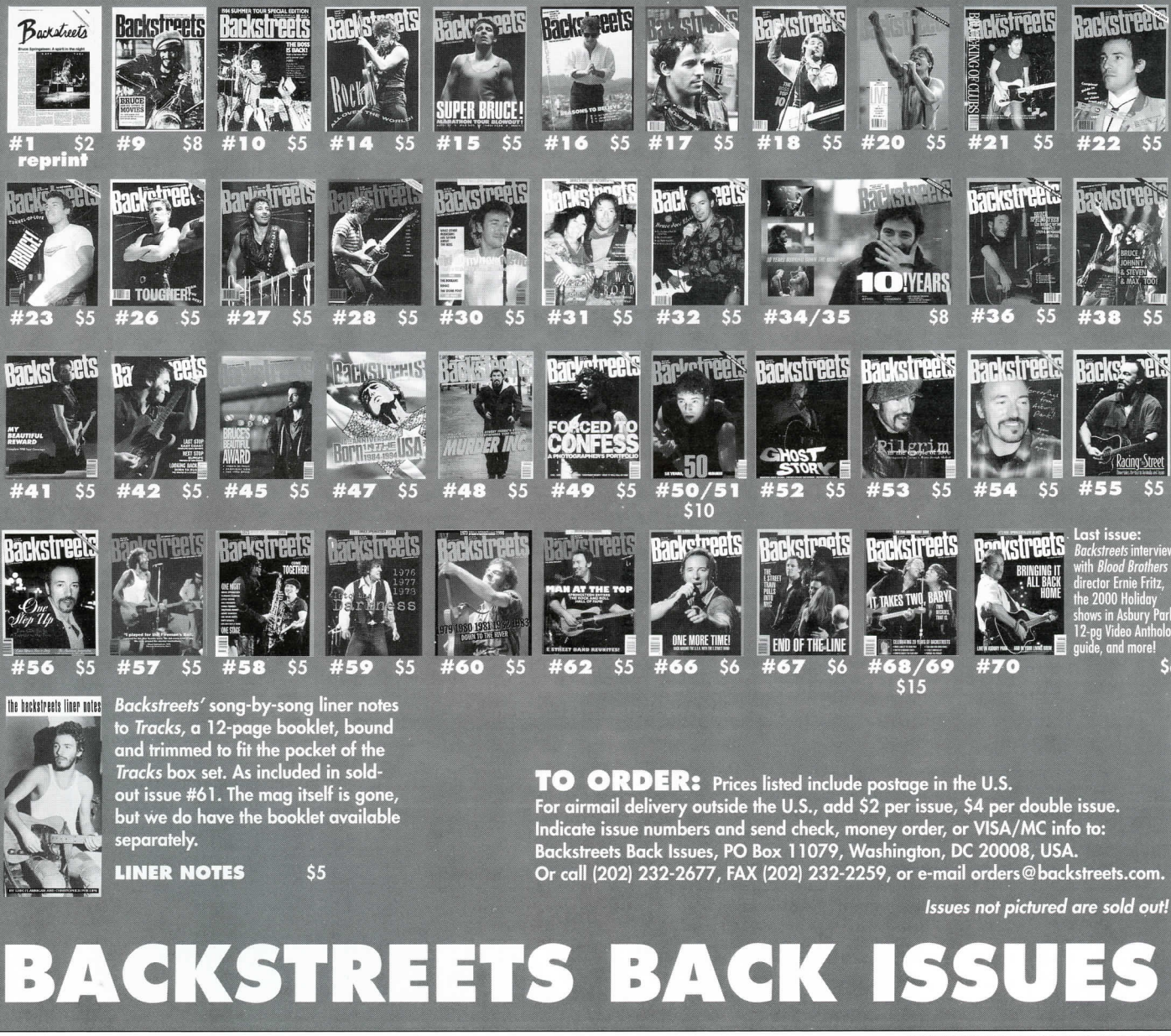

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